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*Let's Talk About You*

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# *Let's Talk About You*

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*Let's Talk About You*

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## *Symptoms of Being Somebody*

All that we need to do,  
Be we low or high,  
Is to see that we grow  
Nearer the sky.

LIZETTE WOODWORTH REESE

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You COULD do with a few changes in your general make-up. That's what you say to yourself day and night, and you don't mean anything so easy as the make-up you put on your face. Not that your face couldn't stand a change in contour, also. As for your hair, split ends are harder to hide than a split personality. Then you look at your hands and sigh. Not one thing about them to make strong men wish they had been born early English poets. And then the matter of a neater silhouette. When you think of last week's style show, you don't even ask yourself what those models have that you don't have. You know

a lot of the answers and you don't like any of them

But if your appearance were the only thing that weighed on your mind, you wouldn't sink into despair, because after all people can do things about their looks. In these days of exercises and experts no one needs to deviate far from a perfect line and the skin you love to look at.

Actually, though, appearance is the least of your troubles, even if you include the defects of your wardrobe. Your real dissatisfaction lies deeper. You don't have any personality. To be sure, some of your friends think you have. They think you're an asset to the crowd, and you're glad they do, but then friends are like that when you go around with them a lot.

The kind of personality you have in mind is different. You'd like a quick comeback for all occasions, so that no one knows what you'll say next but everyone wants to hear because your comments are bound to be clever. It isn't that you don't think of some clever things to say but you think of them after you get home in your own room and are cold-creaming your face. Your automatic trigger doesn't function. Also—while you're thinking up improvements—you'd like something to talk about when you start out with a blind date instead of just clutching at the weather and then having to wade through silence after all. What you want is really more than a line of witty chatter, helpful as that would be. You'd like to talk

about something significant. Not about social security or reciprocal tariff or the philosophy of democracy, but something that would make a date feel he'd had a worth-while evening and that the armed forces were fighting for a kind of girl who amounted to something. Of course, if you knew just what it was you wanted to say, you'd brush up on it, but you aren't sure.

Now here you go again, you realize, fuming about yourself when there are so many more important things to worry about these days. With your own brother overseas it seems as if you shouldn't think of yourself so much as you do. But you can't keep your mind on the risks of battle all the time. In fact, that's the very thing you try not to think of at all. That's the thing you try to keep your father and mother and the younger children from thinking of. You have a feeling that if you do not think of Bob's being in danger, perhaps he won't be in danger. As if you could will him to safety by never thinking of him as anything but strong and well and laughing the way he always was. He's never really out of your mind. He's part of all the plans you make. Now next summer you intend to—but there you are once more, back on the subject of your own plans.

*But that's all right. You have to be concerned about yourself. If you're going to help make a better world, you have to start with yourself. Self-discontent is all*

*to the good if you really mean to make the improvements that need to be made. If the improvements are real and you set to work on them, you'll be surprised how soon your mind is free for other things. And as soon as your mind is occupied with other things, other people's needs, you not only forget about some of your own needs but they actually disappear. You have something to talk about because you are doing something interesting. Your personal world with you at the center shrinks in importance as you become a more real part of life around you—which you can do at any time.*

But how? That's what you keep asking yourself—how? You'd like to do something about the war to get it over more quickly, but what? This keeping on in school is upsetting. You'd like to take a nurse's course and go where things are happening. But the armed forces will take only graduate nurses and by the time you spend three years in training the war may be over. Moreover, you don't want nursing as a permanent profession. You want to be a concert pianist. But how could you help win a war as a concert pianist even if you were ready now? All in all, you've decided you'd better be something practical such as a good office secretary and so you're taking typing at school. But then again you think what a lot of good secretaries will be waiting for jobs when the war's over. Maybe by that time concert pianists will

be needed Bob will be disappointed if you give up the piano. However you look at it, you feel as if you were just making time. You want to be getting somewhere.

But where is the world going? You can't help asking yourself that. Even your own country—where is it headed? Some people say we have to win the war first and then concern ourselves with the next step. But like most students even now while we're fighting the war you want to know what the next step will be. Some people say we're fighting to save the British empire and other people say they're willing to fight to save the British empire, but still others aren't willing. Some say we're fighting to free small nations from aggressive big nations and to give every country a chance to be free in its own way. Then what about India; will it be free in its own way?

You hate to bring up India even in your own mind, because that leads to the whole race question and you've never made up your mind what you think about the equality of races. You feel as if the Chinese ought to be free and you'd just as soon meet them on terms of equality. But if you start making way for the yellow race, what about the black race? You know that Negroes don't get a fair chance right here in our own country. It's harder for them to get jobs; more difficult to get an education. And after they get an education, if they become doctors or lawyers or

teachers, it is difficult for them to get established. Ought you to do something about them?

As soon as you begin thinking of the world around you, even the American sector, things become complicated. Some people have too much money; other people have too little. The ones with money can call a doctor whenever they like or go to a hospital or buy symphony tickets or do a lot of things for which poor people have to scrape. At the other end of the scale are the migrant workers who are pushed around from celery fields to cranberries to beets without any real homes, people who can never get ahead.

You would like to do something about all these kinds of unfairness, but what can one person do in such a big country? Just vote and pay taxes. Your parents and grandparents have voted and paid taxes for years without any great success.

They've had some success, of course: public libraries and good roads, national parks, free schools, the right to go to church when and if they please. No other country has so many automobiles, bathtubs, furnaces, and front porches. No other country has a better chance for free speech and a free press. At the movies when you stand up for *The Star-Spangled Banner* you know you have a right to be proud. Americans have a good deal. But there again, some people say we shouldn't have so much when most of the world has so little. They say we shouldn't have

cake with frosting until everyone has bread. And you do like frosting! It's a strange world.

*You're right And you have to keep wondering about the strange world The impersonal world about you that seems to have small place for you is as much your concern as the very personal world with you in the center. They are all one world, inner and outer They are all your world, yours to make or mar, to save or lose. You can't do much about the past, except to make its sacrifices worth while, but the future is in your hands*

The future? Sometimes you ask yourself why we are always working for the future. Why should Bob and all the rest risk their lives, give their lives, for the people who live after them? What is the meaning of life? Why are we here? Does religion have an answer, and if it does can you expect to find the answer in churches? You wish you could make up your mind what you think about God. If you knew that, you'd know how much you believe in immortality. Sometimes you wonder if it matters whether life goes on and on through other kinds of experience than this we know on earth, or whether life just snaps off with what we call death. Most of the time you keep your mind on something else but now and then, especially since Bob's been gone, you can't help wondering.

*But you shouldn't try to stop wondering. This, too, is part of your world. Wonder aloud and maybe*

*someone can help you a bit, although in the end you have to make up your own mind.*

Making up one's mind about the world, inner and outer, immediate and long-time, is never an easy task. And the task is complicated by the fact that one has to work on all parts at once and to grow as the plan grows—to become a bigger person in order to live in a bigger world and then to become a still bigger person, and so on.

This happened: Marjorie was seventeen the day the Germans marched into Paris. She was a high school senior. Her life had been happy. Her home was comfortable, her friends were many, her future was bright. She was shocked when her father said, "Marjorie, before you finish college every boy you know will be in the armed forces. Every boy, that is, who can pass a physical and the tests won't be so severe this time as last." Marjorie called her Dad an old cynic and said he looked on the pessimistic side and expected the worst.

But she happened to be a rather thoughtful girl. She read a lot and she was on the public forum committee at school. She couldn't help wondering about things and the more she debated within herself the more confused she became. She intended to major in economics when she went to college and she thought that would probably help her but in the meantime,



during the spring of her senior year in high school, she was anything but at peace in her mind

One day her father said, "Why don't you read Wells' *Outline of History* and get some perspective?" That night he went off on a week's trip and while he was gone, Marjorie read the book. It did help. When her father returned she was feeling a lot better. "It got me all straightened out, Dad," she told him. They sat in the living room and talked it over. Marjorie practically reviewed the book. She saw a kind of pattern to civilization. She was happy again and zoomed into her school work and gave a big party. Her father went on another trip.

Two weeks later he returned on a late train which got him home about midnight. Marjorie heard him coming up the stairs. She called to him, "Snap on my light, Dad. Something dreadful has happened." He looked at her woebegone face and thought she looked older. But he had no chance to speak because she went right on. "You know how we had the world all sorted out last week? Well, I found out some more things *and they don't fit in the scheme.*"

The conversation that followed was a long one. It's hard enough to fit together the puzzle of a world when you think you have all the pieces, but to get it together and then find more pieces that have to fit somewhere—that's difficult. "Is it always like this?" Marjorie asked. "Do things keep changing so that

you have to keep on making over your scheme, your philosophy?"

"It's always like this," her father told her gravely. "As long as you live you have to keep rebuilding the house you live in and keep on living in it at the same time. Some of the foundation stones remain true, and maybe a wall or two will withstand every gale. But most of it you build and rebuild as long as you live."

Marjorie was silent quite a while. "I thought that once I had things figured out, it would be relatively easy to live accordingly," she said. "What I mean is, even if terribly hard things were required of me I might be able to do them because I would know they were part of the main scheme. But to keep testing the scheme, too, well—that's a big order."

Her father said, "That's a big order."

And it is. Sometimes one part of the order looms larger than the others and we work at that part with particular zest, and then we shift to another sector. Sometimes we forget about ourselves entirely for quite a while and when we turn back to ourselves we are surprised that we have grown. It's a job to keep on becoming more of a somebody and at the same time to keep on making more of a world.

## *Wanted: A Footstep*

Don't ever let him know she liked him best.  
For this must ever be  
A secret kept from all the rest  
Between yourself and me

LEWIS CARROLL, *Alice in Wonderland*

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ALL DRESSED UP and no one to take you out A new dress that brings out those lines, those eyes, that dash—but what's the use if it doesn't bring out the man? Now even a man, meaning one you wouldn't have noticed if he had driven up in your favorite roadster two years ago. A stark horizon and you in the prime of life. Every hale young male for miles around and months ahead gone off to do his duty for his country. Not that you would have it otherwise! But still. Darkness is darkness no matter how the fuse got blown.

These days, this is the situation which confronts

girls the country over. High school girls, at least the older ones, and college girls. Business girls and farm girls and young professional women. No dates.

But of the entire group, thirteen to thirty, high school girls have the edge on the others. They do have boys their own age. Their own chronological age. We admit from the start that through the first half of the teens, at least, the psychological age of boys seems younger than the psychological age of girls the same age—if that's plain, and unfortunately it has been plain for centuries. You've noticed how it goes—through grade school the fourth-graders, seventh-graders, whatever graders, whether boys or girls, seem about the same age. If they are eleven, they act eleven and these days there isn't much difference between the occupations of boys and girls. They all play baseball, even football; they all hike, swim, take up tennis, have clubs, passwords and codes. Sometimes girls want to stick together and scorn the boys; sometimes boys high-hat the girls. But all the high-hatting is about on a par.

Then sometime between the eighth and tenth grades girls take a spurt ahead of the boys. Suddenly they look older than they are. Thirteen-year-olds could pass for sixteens. For that matter the eighteen-year-olds could pass for sixteens, too. For several years they all look about sixteen together. Some of this similarity is due to the clothes which teen-age girls

wear; there is not much difference in the attire of high school freshman and college freshman. However, beginning with the teens girls really are more mature physically and mentally than their boy classmates. This sudden difference between them is hard on the girls and on the boys, too. The girls are likely not to want to date their classmates and the boys are likely not to want to date anybody. And yet class parties will come along, not to mention neighborhood parties and all the other doings where boys and girls naturally get together.

Not only are boys likely to seem younger than girls of the same age but sometimes they are slower in achieving their adult height. Even those who are going to be strapping six-footers at seventeen may seem, at fifteen, to have halted permanently at five-four. For some reason a girl seems particularly embarrassed when her date is shorter than she. The difference of a few inches can obliterate the joy of life. Ann was a high school sophomore when Alan began to ask her to go places with him. She was moderately tall, meaning five-five, but so slender that she looked taller. Alan was two inches shorter although a year older. Ann couldn't take it—"trailing an infant like that." The unfortunate thing was that they had every sort of interest in common. They both preferred swimming to eating. They liked the same books, collected the same sort of records. Whenever they

were thrown together accidentally they had a great time. But when it came to putting on a party dress and stepping out with Alan, Ann "nearly died."

"Don't be infantile yourself," her mother told her. "All the men in Alan's family are tall. He will shoot up all of a sudden."

"Maybe not," Ann would say bitterly. "Maybe there is a recessive strain in the height component of their family and he'll always be a true short." You can see she knew her Mendelian heredity and was not otherwise stupid. Neither was Alan so slow. He always asked Ann first for everything so that she either had to accept or frankly tell him he was too short or think up a reason for not going to the party at all. Because she happened to be the kind who didn't turn down one boy and make a play for another, her life was one long dilemma.

Alan stayed short until he was eighteen. Then one summer he grew eleven inches which naturally worried his parents but thrilled Ann to adoration. Her worry was permanently past tense. Last June they graduated from the university and were married the next day. They have a book of high school kodak pictures. "I went through a lot for you, Alan," Ann says. "Nothing like what I suffered over you," Alan tells her.

Of course they might both have saved themselves their useless misery by enjoying together the many

things they really did enjoy together and not worrying over the length of the shadows they cast.

We could pause to ponder why it is that boys seem to mature more slowly than girls but first we would have to consider the fact that a long infancy and an extended period of dependence and preparation seems to mark the human species from all other animals and to distinguish civilized individuals from their primitive ancestors. Also we could pause to ponder that girls in modern times—say from 25,000 B.C. to now—have had to take on immediate responsibility for the welfare of the race at an earlier age than boys. But who wants to consider the entire evolutionary process when she is all dressed up, including gloves and high-heeled shoes, waiting for the doorbell to ring? As if it ever rang these days except to announce the dry cleaner or the newspaper boy. Might as well get a bell which automatically plays taps

But take these younger boys—and you might as well—they are really worth attention. You don't have to be the motherly type either. Chances are they have more interests than you do and are better informed about sports, politics, professional possibilities and the war. Quite a sum total. Chances are also that they skate better, swim better, hike better, read as much, know the same movies and radio programs, and like the same food you like. What else are you interested

in anyway? Oh, that. But fortunately love is not like a popover, now or never. It's more like fruit cake which time—anyway a little time—improves the flavor of

And did it ever occur to you that if you want to be a success in the only way which matters to a woman—meaning to have charm as a quality which colors and distinguishes everything she does—then you have to have practice. To be sure, some girls are born with a kind of winsome come-hither compounded of interest in other people and joy in living, but still charm can be learned and earned just as surely as a good carriage or a musical speaking voice can be learned and earned. Those younger boys are actually your made-to-order laboratory if you want to be calculating about your own future.

Calculating in a friendly sort of way. What you calculate is that you want them to have a grand time when with you and that you want to learn how the world looks to their masculine minds. You never see the world whole until you see it through both masculine and feminine eyes. Make a game of it and when a freshman asks you for a date, thank him heartily and set yourself to seeing that he has a good time in his way.

His way may be to talk about model airplanes the entire evening. And maybe you've never lost any sleep over model planes yourself. You don't care for



fine wood shavings, or blueprints or even for glue. But listen—today the fate of the world rides the wings of a plane. To thousands on thousands of the fittest, finest young men of our land the technicalities of airplanes are the breath of life. They live and sleep and dream and study and fly those planes. If you have an opportunity to learn about planes from scratch, lay aside your compact for an evening and see how fast the old brain can soak in some new subject matter. Perhaps intricate devices may not fascinate you the way they do your male contemporaries but the power and possibilities of tomorrow throb in those same engines. Planes do more than make war. Planes carry food to starving nations. They will set the new commerce, the new economics. After this war, practically all the men you will ever know will be interested in planes. So if you can enter into your young date's hobby, you will be doing yourself a good turn. As well as him. And it *is* a good turn to him. He knows how young he is but no teen-aged youth likes to feel as young as a young girl can make him feel.

Maybe your young date likes to dance but you think he's awkward. So which? So you teach him to dance well and he'll carry your picture in his billfold all his life. Not literally, maybe, but a day may come when he thinks of you so gratefully—your good nature, your patience, your giggle—that he says the

right word about you in a place where it matters. This happened.

Janet is pretty as an apple blossom in spring but shy. When the world began for her she was a high school junior. One night she went to her brother's college fraternity dance with a friend of her brother's. He was nice, period. But at the dance she met Tall-dark-and-handsome who seemed to be the light of everybody's eyes. She just met him, that's all. Remember, she was shy. He met her, too, but naturally. He thought he would cut in on her. Remember, she was pretty. He didn't get around to cutting in on her but still, when the dance was over he did remember her enough to wish he had. Couple days later he gets talking with a bunch of fellows who include some younger brothers who might someday be pledges. The older boys discuss the recent dance and the girls. Don't think they don't. Janet's erstwhile date speaks up with appreciation of Janet and at the sound of her name one of those younger brothers breaks through. He knows Janet! She's a class ahead of him at school. She taught him to dance. Was she ever the swell little number when you knew her! More good time. More——

"Listen, kid," says Tall-dark-and-handsome, "what's her last name?"

That night Janet's telephone rings. You can write the rest of the story and no matter how good you

make it you won't be good enough because he wrote her name in neons, as far as college life is concerned, and the conclusion is not yet. Remember she was pretty, to be sure, but remember she was shy. She might very well have missed the boat for quite some time if not permanently had she not made such an honest-to-goodness friend of that sophomore boy she taught to dance. The moral is that you carve your own future and you can't have too many loyal friends. Moreover, neither you nor they will always be as young as you are now

Really it's a break for you to have some male contemporaries so young that they are not concerned with your swooning good looks and never notice when you change your hair style. It means that if you succeed in interesting them you have to be genuinely interested in something which already interests them. And that very necessity broadens your own interests which is one recipe for becoming an interesting woman.

Deliberate this: You may cover a lot of territory in the near future, even geographically speaking, because a good many of the young men now overseas are going to have long-time overseas careers in all sorts of diplomatic and commercial services. One of these soon-days you may be married to one of those young men, or you may be in the same service yourself. Then you will need all the cosmopolitan training

you can muster It will be important to you to be able to find a common interest with the man who is your dinner partner If you ever sat at table with the ambassador's lady, you know how it goes She can draw sparks from the flintiest hatchet-face More and harder, she can make a businessman feel literary and a literary man feel like a business success, she can make an artist feel like an explorer and a weather-beaten explorer feel like a musician. Is she putting on? She is not She is a master in the art of bringing out the best in people, of bringing out the hidden interests to which they are secretly devoted but for which they have too little time. She literally makes them put their best foot forward and a man tends to live up to his best foot whenever someone has the heart to lend a hand to help him get ahead! Maybe it seems a long climb from you on the skating rink to the ambassador's lady eating off gold plate surrounded by ministers plenipotentiary. But the only path which scales the heights is the one of genuine interest in other people And the boys you might pass by with a toss of the up-sweep are your laboratory in unaffected friendship.

There is one time, however, when your laboratory may seem for a moment to be a booby trap That time is when an older lad, maybe something in uniform, rounds the corner You can't cut off with a nod the younger ones who have been furnishing your good

time. Unfair tactics are never successful in the end. Word gets around. More than that, you have to live with yourself in all kinds of weather and when the cold days come there's no cloak so warm as one's own integrity. On the other hand, when the Real Thing comes through the gate it is no favor to the second best to keep him on your string wondering if he is first. Frank and easy does it. There need be no conflict in eighteen-carat friendships no matter how many nor what their vintage.

These days, however, the problem of sorting out dates does not keep many girls awake nights. The problem lies in the other direction so that you are almost tempted to make another trip to the drugstore just to see the uniforms come in. But—well—you aren't that hard up for a date. There's still the matter of taste. Actually a poor date is—a poor date. If he isn't your sort you're happier at home reading yesterday's paper. It's like that.

However, if there is an army camp near by, or an ordnance post or a navy school or any other unit for training armed forces, you ought to do your part in providing amusement and entertainment. Don't be stuffy about waiting till you know one of the boys personally. Gather up a bevy of girls with a jolly parent or two and take yourselves over to the USO center. If you need an excuse, offer your glee club program or your dramatic club play.

When your own boys come home on furlough, the ones you grew up with or knew at school, that's your big inning. You're responsible for making their days at home the happiest possible. These are the days worth planning for and cooking for and keeping up the grade averages for—so you can take a day off at the right time. Your boys also include the ones your father invites out for dinner, by way of the Service Center or some other organization which does retail business in lads away from home. Any boy who comes into your home and merits your family's "Come again" is part of your current responsibility.

Probably this sort of responsibility doesn't come your way, though, as often as you wish it did. On moonlight nights you feel the world is a desert waste. But wait, Lady Crusoe. Put your attention onto tending your own oasis, making it a lovely place, and one of these days you will spy a satisfactory footstep in the sand pointing in your direction.

## Solo

Sport, that wrinkled Care derides,  
And Laughter holding both his sides  
MILTON, *L'Allegro*

---

SPEAKING OF KEEPING the oasis green, why talk as if the only substitute for men is men? As a matter of record, at least half the good times in the world are had by women unaccompanied, unadorned and unimpeded. Not any men a-tall. A girl who doesn't get full flavor out of funning around with other misses, misses more than she can afford to miss. Some of the authorities who ought to know attest that girls are quicker-witted than boys. They think faster—meaning the girls, not the authorities. They sense incongruities—the big fuss for the small gain, the fine service for the poor food, the large words for the

small thoughts, all those mismatements which are the stuff of humor. They aren't afraid of being themselves. They speak their convictions. They don't take their sports too seriously although they tend to play well when they play at all. Not all girls are all these things but anyone who tries to tell you that women are petty, personal and petulant just doesn't know modern girls. They have a good time, solo, duet, quartette or full chorus.

Maybe girls will do for movies, you admit. Anyone knows that it is possible to go to a movie with a girl friend or half a dozen girl friends and enjoy the picture so thoroughly that you laugh all the way home, whip up something good to eat and devour it with gusto, and finally drift off to bed with the grin still hovering. Movies, yes. But dances, no.

You have to analyze this dance business. The kind of dance for which you dress in a long swishing skirt, bow in the hair and perfume behind the ears—that's one kind of dance. If the orchestra's whine and the moon's shine are properly imposed on a June night, then a man may be a necessity. Just one of those things you can't leave out without ruining the total effect. That's the romantic dance and all very well when it can be had. But when it cannot be had, there is still the romp.

Now a romp is a dance for the sake of motion and music. Ever consider a dance for such quaint reasons?



A likely combination of girls, music and motion can make a memorable party. All the fixings necessary are a bare floor and a victrola or a piano. With food, maybe, at the end of the bat because after a hoe-down the appetite turns somersaults uphill. Any girl who has gone to a girls' school can vouch for these merry-go-mads which happen to happen almost any night in the college grill or student union.

Only the uninitiated believe that a girl who "leads" can't "follow" and will therefore find herself a liability when a man takes over. Nothing could be further from the truth. If you have a genuine sense of rhythm and easy control of your own lithe body, you can dance with anyone including Fred Astaire and follow as the sunflower trails the sun. Dancing with another girl is an excellent way to develop that freedom and poise. When it comes to the fancy steps you don't mind stepping on her pre-ratton shoes and she will feel quite free to give you a steer between the shoulder blades as needed. If you want to learn to dance exceedingly well you might even engage a dancing master for your romp and learn a few specialties. There still are dancing masters, you know, and they still teach some of the fine points you may never learn on your own.

Square dancing is a test of the nimble mind as well as of the nimble feet. A girl who can really dance is probably at her best in one of those twirling,

partner-changing sets Find someone in your town, or out in the country, who can teach someone in your group to call If there is no such person, buy some records which give the patter in slow motion Then unbend your joints and have a frolic. By the end of the third party, you'll be a smoother dancer and when the boys come around again you'll be a more sparkling partner to the end of your days. So—on with the dance!

These menless months are also a fine time to develop some new sports. Can you ski? And does it matter? It does Take that handsome pin-up on your wall—him of the movie neons The one you imagine as driving down your street, having a slight accident right at your curb, being brought into your house where you administer first aid so charmingly that he cancels his personal appearance in order to invite you out to dinner. Take that one He skis. In fact he plans to spend his honeymoon on skis. Before he has finished the first course at that jolly little dinner, he visualizes you in a stunning blue ski suit, white fur trim, coming down the side of a mountain—"Listen, Mary, you do ski?" And you say, "Heavens, no, I just sit home and read magazines."

Curtain.

If it isn't skiing, maybe it is tennis. Or golf. Or skating Or swimming You name it but after you've chosen your sport go all out after it. And not just for

the reason that men like a girl who can get around outdoors. A sport exists for fun's sake. There's a special kind of joy in rapid motion out of doors, motion in which you participate with all your muscles. Surfboard riding gives a kinesthetic pleasure which no automobile can touch. Try riding a surfboard and you'll discover what "kinesthetic" means in your life.

To be sure, some girls cannot go out for sports. For physiological or psychological reasons, sports are too strenuous for them. If you happen to be one of those girls, accept the fact without self-pity. Helen of Troy didn't know a golf ball from a baseball and yet she had a merry life what with launching a thousand ships and things. However, she probably did get out in the palace garden and take herself some good brisk walks. Also at times she no doubt breathed fast. When you can't do anything else you can breathe! And take it from the experts, opera singers to skin specialists, nothing—nothing at all—can do for your figure and skin and body tone and disposition what proper breathing can do. You don't think breathing is an exercise and certainly not a sport? Try a spell of deep breathing to music for sixty days hand running and then look in your own mirror to see whether this most innocent and arduous of all exercises pays dividends or not.

Among the sports, camp cookery is a lost art on its

way back thanks to the ingenuity and persistence of the scouts—boy and girl, old and young—as well as to the allurements of our national parks and the wide sweet sweep of our forests and mountains. If you can pack a good lunch basket and broil a thick steak over a fire you made yourself, then you will never find yourself without steaks to broil. Practice does it. Gather a flock of girls, or maybe just a small covey, and make for the open spaces. Don't forget the salt.

Until the war came along, gardening was almost a lost art with the younger generation except for the lucky thousands who were trained in the 4-H clubs. They know the thrill of becoming a partner with sunshine, rain and sweat. They know the miracle, no less, of small hard seeds in the earth transformed into succulent vegetables and gorgeous flowers. They know how it is to make a waste place bloom.

If you want to have firsthand part in rehabilitating the earth, make a green thing grow. In the next decade one of the fundamental problems of reconstructing Europe and Asia will be the task of reclaiming fields and gardens. You may think your small garden has no relationship to Poland's bare fields but it has. Moreover, as soon as you become a gardener you will begin to notice the elemental factors which matter to farmers. Weather is no longer merely a personal consideration of convenience or pleasure. Your ground must have rain in summer and a blanket of

snow in winter, or a climatic equivalent. It must be warmed by the sun and fanned by the wind. Slowly you also become aware of the importance of topsoil an inch of which takes four hundred years to make and perhaps four minutes to wash away. Even though you live in a city and garden in a pocket-sized back yard, you discover the universal problem of keeping your soil well fed. In gardening, you have yourself a sport, a world bond, and maybe a permanent vocation.

And while you are thinking of growing things, did you ever cogitate the matter of a pet who pays? Not a pup who pays board by the week nor a cat who comes through with the rent, although in these days when householders dash off on sudden trips there is a neat profit in running an inn for other people's pets. But how about raising animals to sell? This happened:

Evelyn Assay—remember her?—was a college freshman in a girls' school in western Illinois. Eighteen years old and living on a farm. As far as looks went she might have lived in Hollywood because she was a trim piece from her sturdy little feet to her curly brown hair and highly photogenic besides. Evelyn wanted to make money to pay her tuition for the good reason that her father could not then afford to pay it. So her father gave her a steer from the carload of skinny young animals he had brought in from

the west to fatten for market Evelyn named her steer Sargo and went to work on him. He was her invested capital and she put her interest in where she wanted to get it out. She was up before dawn mixing and heating mash for Sargo, taking him out for exercise, currying him as carefully as if he had been a race horse. Once the barn caught fire and Evelyn saved Sargo before she thought of her clothes. You could draw this story out to fill two pages of newsprint and a rotogravure section besides—as many a paper later did—but the short of it is that Evelyn took Sargo to the International Stock Show in Chicago, 1939. She and her father drove the truck, Evelyn's feet resting on her shabby suitcase held together with binder twine. Sargo rode in the back of the truck and when the sleety rain came down he got all the blankets and Evelyn got a cold that almost went into pneumonia. Once at the Stock Show, Sargo passed all the preliminary tests and eliminations right up to the grand last night. At the final judging he was one of three. Evelyn stood beside him while the judges passed back and forth, back and forth, appraising every solid square inch of those three super-super steers. And then—and then—the final judge's hand rested on Sargo's rump. He was the winner.

Five thousand dollars is a lot of money to bring home. Not to mention such gifts as a fine camera, a cedar chest, a set of flat silver, a bedroom suite, a box

of letters proposing marriage to an assortment of admirers and a couple wagonloads of other trophies Evelyn's pet paid. She bought a farm for her family who are about as fine an American farm family as any county agent could discover. She finished her two-year course at college, taught a country school and married a soldier. When she first came home with the blue ribbon, movie contracts came her way, she was offered a trip through every state in the Union; radios pled for her time. But she had discovered something she liked better—raising animals “from nothing much to the best there is.”

But you needn't be spectacular to be a success. When Nancy was nine her family moved to Omaha out on the edge of town where there was much space—just space. That was nearly three years ago. Nancy, missing her friends and having no playmates near by, got the idea she would like to raise chickens and she sold the idea to her brother who is two years younger. But she did not sell the idea to her mother whose work keeps her traveling a great deal. Neither did she sell it to her father whose job in a war plant takes all his daylight hours. And certainly she did not sell it to the housekeeper who was about as much interested in chickens as she was in llamas.

Undeterred, Nancy gave her brother a basket of little chicks for an Easter present, yellow and downy and full of cheeps. Instead of cuddling them for a

day and then giving them away, Nancy and her brother made a place for them in the tool shed which contained only a few tools and a great many boxes someone might someday want. Said Nancy each morning at breakfast, "Twenty chickens wouldn't take any more care than ten." At lunch Nancy made the same remark and again at dinner, with variations on the theme throughout the day. Moreover, she fed the chickens regularly. By and by her father remarked to her mother, "She's right about twenty chickens being no more care than ten." Her mother said, "She might as well raise them this summer and get the chicken business out of her system."

Soon Nancy and her brother had 118 chickens. They took all the care of them except the once-a-week cleaning of the tool house which was now a full-fledged hen house. All summer the family ate fried chicken. All winter they had eggs. Now it is one thing to be faithful to chickens in the summer—but then there's a catch to almost every hobby. Nancy never got caught on her catch, however. Winter and summer, she went right on raising chickens.

Some people might think there is no logical connection between chickens and colonels but when a certain colonel happened to meet Nancy he immediately asked to take her out to dinner. By herself, too, and at the swankiest place he could find. Because he had a passion for raising chickens? Not on your life.



Because he liked to dine with interesting women and Nancy is one at twelve. There's an authentic quality about her and she's lit up about life

Well? Well. Pets can pay. But more. Instead of life's being a weary round of chores and dishwashing, studies, reports, making over clothes, it can be—along with all those things—a corking adventure at any age. If it isn't an adventure the trouble is not in the situation dealt you but in you. A head is more important than a hand any day

But maybe you are one of those gals who cannot abide livestock, not even canaries, and maybe the feel of dirt under your fingernails gives you the jumping jitters. What can you do besides go to school, work and knit during these stressful days when nothing is normal, whatever that was? The creative urge runs high. When you get up in the morning you have to have something to look forward to. Something which calls forth imagination and zest. Something worth thinking back on when you go to bed at night still smiling to yourself.

Did you ever try dramatics? Not you. You aren't the type. You wish you were but fortunately you know your limitations. You don't have one thing it takes except maybe the secret yen. Which is plenty if it is real. You couldn't be a less likely prospect than Linda. She was plain. She was skinny. She was shy. And if she got excited her voice vanished to a whis-

per. When her college freshman class decided to revive *The Chinese Lantern* for their spring play, all the likely, lively girls offered themselves. But the dramatic coach wanted to look over every girl in the class before the parts were cast. So Linda came to the meeting. She didn't know that the coach was tired with a great weariness from working with girls who had had "leads" in high school plays. She didn't know it is harder to unlearn poor habits than to start with none at all. Neither did she know she had good carriage and a "cute" profile of a snub-nosed sort. When she was cast as Mee-mee her classmates' horror was less than her own. Yes, of course, when the play came off she was a success or why would we be mentioning her? She threw herself into that part and let herself go. She acted as if she were as attractive as secretly she felt. Because she was frightened she worked fiendishly in order not to let anyone down. She became a class favorite. And yet she had come so near—oh, within a hairsbreadth—of refusing that part because she knew she couldn't act.

Now most girls do not get to begin at the top the way Linda did. It is safer and better in the long run to begin at the bottom. You learn more behind stage than out in front, at least for a long time. You can gather as much poise—which is born of self-dependability—in shifting scenes and operating lights and shooting cues as in talking across footlights. You get

the feel of the whole performance and become sensitive to the play's timing.

At H— College, anyone can tell you who Susan is and Susan will tell you that in all her acting career no moment has been as wonderful as that night of her freshman play when the striking of the clock at exactly the right moment made the play—and she made the clock strike! She was responsible for the rhythm of the whole production.

Never think you are being shoved around if you spend a year or two on costumes and properties. If the stage is in you, you'll make your big entrance in good time. The point is to up-up and give the thing a try. Join the dramatic club at school or at the Y, at church, lodge or community center. Give yourself the break of a new experience which requires effort and co-operation and which may reward you by disclosing ability more exciting than a star's trip through the army camps.

A girls' orchestra is another thing. Or a girls' band. This should be the days of girls' bands and when the boys come home they should find stiff competition in girls' dance bands all over the country. What's so particularly masculine about a sax? Or a fiddle or a flute? Or a conductor who makes hotels pay more for music than for food? Gather up six cronies, or a dozen, and say to them, "Listen, dames We have the

inside track now, see? By the end of the year we'll be the best band in Oconto County."

Or just play for pleasure. For the fun of being part of the music. Get into as good an orchestra as you can rate, even if you have to work like mad to hold your place. Join an orchestra which plays great music. In fact, Deems Taylor has said that great music is the only kind which can stand being played by amateurs.

Maybe it never before occurred to you to play a clarinet. But it occurs to you now. Chances are ten out of nine that somewhere in your community is someone who can teach you. If not the clarinet, then the cello or the horn or the harp or—but did you ever think about the harp? Now there's an instrument worth trading in your bicycle, your record collection and all your best clothes to obtain. Not just for the chance to wear a long white gown, a blue ribbon and a dreamy look while the audience has eyes for you alone. But for the tone of the instrument itself, for the feel of the strings beneath your fingers, and for the music which will be yours.

Thinking about those records you just traded in for a harp—record collecting is a noble hobby against the day. Against the day the boys come home. Against the day when you may live far from concerts and even from movies. Against the day when your own life needs its face lifted. But then, no one collects records as a future pleasure. This morning's at seven,

just as Browning surmised You collect music for music's sake to have and to play while you work around the house, while you knit, while you sit and think . . . or dream . . . or just sit

What kind of records? That depends upon the kind of you. You determine the record collection but the record collection also determines the you You are the collection which is really in the making A collection of all you hear and give your mind to Ponder that when you trade a dollar bill for a black disk

Ponder everything for which you trade your dollar these days That dollar represents your time, or someone else's Time and energy are your choicest possessions If you invest them cannily today you can cut coupons tomorrow,

## *Your Own Bridle Path*

Know how to arrange your life, with discretion, and not as accident may determine, but with foresight, and choice. It is a toilsome affair without recreation, like a journey without inns, variety in mental equipment makes it happier.

BALTAZAR GRAECIAN, *A Truth-telling Manual*

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"SPORT" AND "HOBBY" are not synonyms and yet one may frequently be the other. You can make sports your hobby, or any one of them, but if you do not go out for any sport you can still ride a hobby. Originally a hobby was a small ambling horse said to have come from Ireland, and probably the best hobbies still amble. They ought not be driven too hard and certainly should never be allowed to forget their place and drive you.

We all know girls who are driven by their hobbies. Girls like Hazel who was a collector of foreign dolls. She went with her traveling art class on a sketching trip through Europe but she was so busy hunting

dolls that she seldom had a chance to sketch, never saw a cathedral, missed the plays and did not realize until she was back home that she hadn't had a very good time and did wish that she had sketched.

Collections are more fun when they do not possess you. The older you get the less likely you are to collect large articles such as the discarded steering wheels of cars or antique wash boilers—although it is amazing what some small houses contrive to contain beside their hobby-riding mistress. Then, too, there are women who do not know the difference between collecting and indiscriminate saving. They "save" anything which looks like a box. Shelves and shelves are filled with old candy boxes as good as new but empty; laundry boxes, tie boxes, dress boxes, cracker boxes. Of course every family needs some boxes, what with picnic lunches to be packed and packages to mail, but a good saver has to have saving sense. Likewise, what's the use in stacks of saucers which have lost their cups, in old earrings which have lost their mates, in piles of quilt pieces which have lost their patterns, bracelets which have lost their spangles, brooches without pins, beads without clasps, and pictures of relatives whose names one cannot remember? There is something about relatives, however, even distant ones long gone, which makes them hard to discard.

But collecting, *as a hobby*, leads one out and up. It

gives that zip to one's days which matters so much more than any money value a collection may have, although during the depression many a smart woman lived on the proceeds of her antique glass or furniture or jewelry. Any time is a good time to start collecting.

Miss Amelia Rankin made over her life by collecting the labels from wine bottles. She started at age seventy-two. Until that time she had been busy taking care of her mother who lived on and on in their commodious Vermont home. When Miss Amelia found herself alone and free she simply could not think of anything to do with her time. That's the trouble, at seventy or at seven, when one's mother runs one's days completely. Miss Amelia was depressed. She wished she could follow her mother to the quiet New England cemetery.

One day she absent-mindedly picked up the bottle of port which the doctor had ordered for her mother's tonic. "That's an odd label," she said to herself. "This bottle came from across the ocean. Think of the things it has seen which I shall never see." She soaked off the label and stuck it on her mirror and every morning when she looked at it she had a vague thrill over its travels. She wondered if all wine was made abroad and so she began looking for other labels. First she went to the doctor and then to a neighbor who cherished choice wines and finally she went to an importer. Miss Amelia did not care for wine to



drink but how she cared for the labels. She began collecting. At the end of fifteen years she owned what was probably the world's most complete collection of wine-bottle labels. She had gone to Europe to get them, and to Africa and Asia Minor and Persia and India and "clean around the world." What she got, of course, was something more than labels. She got an intimate knowledge of people; she understood strange customs—and that they weren't so strange. She knew her geography and had a choice fund of anecdotes. Labels never became an obsession with her, as did Hazel's foreign dolls. She learned folk tunes, which were often related to old drinking songs, and made a side collection of Chinese woodwinds. She became one of the most interesting women in New England. Whenever she stayed home her house was overrun with people, often famous people, who came to see her. But at eighty-seven she did not stay home a great deal because she had so much to see. She would stay home when she was older.

Ask your grandmother if she ever had a charm string. Charm strings are in vogue again. A good charm string contains hundreds of buttons. Jet buttons, many-faceted, plain or jeweled; bone buttons, all colors and shapes; ivory buttons brought home on the clipper ships which first brought tea from China; buttons carved from peach seeds in Japan; carved from lapis or chalcedony; brass buttons with insignia

of the Revolutionary army; buttons of soft silver, hammered copper, enamel inlaid on gold. If your ancestors didn't leave a charm string, you can be an ancestor and leave one for your descendants.

Matchboxes may be a mere clutter of pasteboard or a liberal education. Some small fry pick them up from everywhere, including gutters, but more sophisticated collectors insist on having them new and "brought home" from someplace where someone you know has been. Once souvenir spoons were a collector's treasure, and are beginning to come back as legitimate items, but the fun was spoiled when department stores in St. Paul, say, began to sell spoons marked Spokane and Dallas. Before that sellout, it had meant something to live in Emporia and have a spoon from Sacramento "St. Louis—1904" represented the Exposition and Niagara Falls stood for someone's honeymoon trip. Even today, if you go in for geographical collections, the fun is in having the items brought to you by people who have been in far places or in buying your treasures in far places yourself.

If your mother collects old glass, pick the pattern you like best and start a collection of your own. If it's lion glass your sharp eye will begin to spot it whenever you visit in the country or stop in an antique shop. Or maybe you want to start a collec-

tion of President plates or English egg cups, or odd little pitchers from everywhere.

Cottage ornaments are another quaint item—those Dresden shepherds and shepherdesses which graced the mantels of the Empire period; the pirouetting figurines with skirts of china lace, the strolling minstrels who played blue glass guitars, the glazed maidens who danced around a maypole of blown glass. Akin to them are the Staffordshire dogs and cats of Queen Victoria's day. Or maybe you go in for other toy animals, elephants—trunks up for luck—in teak, ivory, bone, silver, wood, wool or how they come.

Numismatics is a science as well as a hobby de luxe. If you learn your coins you will also learn your history which, by the way, is one of the intellectual joys of a good collection. Almost automatically, you learn what was going on in the world when the face of Augustus Caesar was stamped on coins. If you have a running thread of facts about any one thing, you have something dependable upon which to append bits of knowledge from other fields. A brisk hobby ridden up and down the centuries will beat a path for your mind's most exciting excursions. Thus a coin collection can have many of the advantages with none of the disadvantages of a canter around the world.

In a sense it doesn't matter what you start collect-

ing just so the collection leads you up and out, makes life more interesting, gives you more knowledge about the wonders of your world. But it seems a bit sad to put time into collecting eight thousand paper napkins, as did one girl in Illinois, without learning one little thing about paper, patterns, color or any related subject. She just had napkins. A child may be satisfied with twenty stones of different shapes but a grownup, or a growing-up, comes to the place where he wants to know something about his stones.

Stamp collecting may be nothing but an exercise in hoarding small squares of colored paper or it may be a liberal education. By the time you have talked three minutes with a girl who collects stamps you know whether she collects with her hands alone or with hands plus head. Even book collecting can be stupid business if you just want to fill shelves and count volumes. Plenty of first editions and beautiful bindings are sold to people who have no more discrimination than the bookworms which eat their way from volume to volume concerned with devouring paper rather than text. But books you keep because you read them once with joy and intend to lend them around and read them again—they are your own in exactly the way a collection ought to belong to its collector.

Sometimes you outgrow a hobby. Hatpins may be fascinating at one stage in your career and not

mean a thing when you have passed on to first editions of symphonies. Or book jackets may paper your room in your literary teens and be nothing but tinder for your fire when your days are filled with trying new recipes on a new husband in a new home. Don't be sad or wistful about discarding a hobby. It did its bit for you Find another eager soul who will appreciate the beginnings you have made and hand over the entire collection with a free hand and your face toward tomorrow.

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## Something from Nothing

It is little known or set down to the commendation of Franklin that when he was young in business, and stood in need of sundry articles in line of his profession as a printer, he had the ingenuity to make them for himself. In this way he founded letters of lead, engraved various printing ornaments, cut wood-cuts, made printers' ink, engraved copperplate vignettes, and made his plate-press.

WATSON'S *Annals of Philadelphia*

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MAYBE YOU HAVE never been interested in collecting things but you do get a bang out of making something from nothing. Many a children's hospital has blessed the instinct to make scrapbooks. Bright pictures which would otherwise have gone into oblivion with the magazines from which they were cut can be pasted onto cloth, instead of paper, and made into treasure books for a children's orthopedic ward. Part of the fun is in delivering them yourself if possible. Scrapbooks of jokes and cartoons are needed now in hospitals for this war's wounded.

Sometimes we smile at the handwork of the girls

of yesterday who made beads from strips of advertisements rolled tightly, varnished and strung on long strings to make portieres. They must have had a lot of ingenuity to make beads of colored salt, baked and glazed, for necklaces. But girls of today make fascinating necklaces of wild berries, varnished, or tiny pine cones, or alphabet macaroni. Cigar-box fiddles are the start for toy orchestras; dollhouses made from orange crates still take prizes at state fairs. Birdhouses made from kegs, cheeseboxes or even grape baskets add distinction to a back yard.

The yen to make something from nothing is probably a hand-me-down from our pioneer forebears who had to do a lot of it. These days our great-grandmothers would feel right at home creating hats out of a wisp of veiling, a scrap of velvet and a feather curl. They'd feel at home with our crazy-quilt knitting bags and probably would not be too surprised at the swanky leather bows cut from old gloves and evening slippers. In all of these activities, it is the contriving which matters, the ingenuity and resourcefulness. Like any other talent, inventiveness develops when used. If you want to know how inventive your schoolmates are, just put on a hobby fair and invite each one to bring his own.

But probably the most exciting hobbies are those which do not depend upon things which must be felt, handled, and worked with. Take bird collecting.

You do not collect birds by putting them in cages but by going where they are, learning their habits, their needs, their usefulness, by sharing their songs, their free flight, their upwinging. This kind of hunting can start at your own door because almost any back yard or front street has at least some English sparrows. Sparrows are birds of personality. Sit still and watch them. Everyone you ever knew is there in feathered miniature—your plump aunt from the country, your motherly neighbor, your gossipy friends, your energetic teacher, your preening young sister. Possibly excepting chickens in a barnyard, a finer assortment of “human” nature than flourishes in a flock of sparrows would be hard to find.

After sparrows look for nuthatches, those bouncing little gray and white fellows who brave any winter and chirp their gratitude for crumbs and suet until it is practically impossible to be unfaithful to them. Bird education begins with a feeding deck because when you feed the birds they begin to come to you with their whimsies and problems. But where do they go then and what do they do next? That's the point at which you pick up your field glasses and take to the woods or the meadow or the city park. After a lifetime of collecting birds you won't have a “thing” to show for your trouble. But what you have will give you pleasure to the end of your way



Collecting flowers and trees is much the same kind of adventure. A new dimension comes into life when you can walk down the street of your own town and call the neighborhood trees by their own names. Soon you find that maples not only differ from oaks, which anyone knows before she starts out, but that maples differ among themselves. They differ not only in species, which means to trees about what nationality means to us, but they differ in their anatomical structure and their psychological temperaments. There are lean maples and stout maples, fussy maples and calm maples, talkative maples and the kind which prefer to stand alone and think. To have a speaking acquaintance with trees, you have to grow in stature yourself. It is more difficult, and also more worth while, to add inches to one's spirit than to one's height.

Some women collect flowers with their paintbrush. To be good at that you have to begin young and train the eye to see color as well as detail. Most of us go through life never really seeing either. We are content to recognize half a dozen shades of green and not so many yellows. We know the sky is blue—and the sea and larkspurs. But the blue of the forget-me-not, gentian, morning glory, hydrangea, cornflower, verbena, hyacinth, hepatica, eyebright, chicory—here are as many shades of blue as there are moods to a summer day. To feel them all is to have

a cultivated spirit and a cultivated spirit is the distinguishing mark of what we used to call a lady, meaning an aristocracy of personality compounded of breeding, experience and finely tempered taste.

Photography is one of the hobbies which easily becomes a profession and after the war will strike a new high, especially in the use of color processes.

When Ruth Alexander Nichols was nine she guessed a puzzle in a child's magazine and won a tiny box of a camera that miraculously took pictures. Ruth was fascinated. Her father—he was Dr. Alexander of Hiawatha, Kansas—thought she might like to develop her own shots. The next Christmas Santa deposited a large package with a No. 2 brownie kodak and everything complete for making pictures. From that day on Ruth was a photographer. When summer came she went to north Wisconsin and camped in tents pitched under primeval pines. By day she took pictures and made doll clothes. In the evening she developed pictures and made doll clothes. She took pictures of chipmunks after taming them so that they would eat from her hand and scamper at her feet. She took pictures of sunfish after taming them also. Some of those chipmunk and sunfish pictures later made their way into *National Geographic*. Summers passed; doll clothes went and boy friends came but the picture taking continued.

By the time she went to college Ruth had a good

camera and she took pictures for her class, for her school publications, for fun. Sometimes she sold pictures, especially post cards by the hundreds, and she made a credible amount of money from her hobby. When she finished college, World War One was under way and her fiancé went off to France. Ruth wanted a job while she waited so she got a job with her camera in New York City which seemed as near to France as she could get. She kept the job for nearly two years, getting better all the time, and then her fiancé came home and they were married.

Her husband was a lawyer, the tall, thin, smart-as-tacks kind who entered an old family firm and had reason to expect a distinguished future. They bought a house in Westfield, New Jersey, and he commuted. Ruth kept house, although housekeeping is certainly not the joy of her life. She also took pictures whenever she had time. She took more pictures after the baby came because Jane was a photogenic infant. Some girls rate curly golden hair and a smile the camera loves to catch while others rate only the adulation of their fond parents. Jane had both which proved fortunate later on. One day her father went off to town as usual but that afternoon he was in the hospital having an operation necessitated by internal injuries received in France. He died.

Then Ruth Nichols ~~had a living to earn. There~~

was some insurance, but not enough. And a second baby coming. By the time Anne arrived her mother was thinking pretty seriously about her kodak. She could not go into New York and take a job because there seemed no good way to leave her two babies. So she stayed home and made herself a job taking pictures of the town's babies, and selling some of them to magazines. You have seen many of them on magazine covers. But she did not start with magazine covers, not by any means. She started wherever she could get a picture in. Among her first published pictures were barnyard babies which one of the women's magazines used in rotogravure. People liked the expressions she caught on the faces of baby colts, lambs, even ducks. Would anybody buy a duck? But yes, in a picture.

Human babies were hardest to take pictures of, though. They felt strange in a strange house where they had to sit under strong lights and look up at a black-shrouded camera. So Ruth bought shelves of toys for the babies. She climbed a ladder with her big camera and took her pictures from new angles. She mixed daylight and artificial light. She developed all sorts of devices. Her patience was past telling. Nervous parents are harder to handle than strange babies, and grandparents are hardest of all.

Years and pictures piled up; hundreds of babies passed Ruth's cameras—which always were the best

cameras to be bought. Black and white gave way to color. Now you see those baby pictures in many of the advertisements which feature babies. This tale could stack up some sizable figures and some large-scale success, not to mention happy and exciting years, but the big thing is that a small-town girl with no unusual opportunities and a lot of hard breaks made her hobby make money. And make *her*.

Do you think these are poor times to be thinking of hobbies, what with the world falling to pieces and tomorrow's sun behind a cloud? This is the time of times. Because life goes on. It has to. If you begin to work and create at the point where your interest is keenest, which is often a hobby, you do two things at once: you get a sense of direction and you build up the habit of achieving. Girls of nineteen-hundred-and-now are going to need both those things while they are still young.

## *You Can Read But—*

Dreams, books, are each a world, and books, we  
know,

Are a substantial world, both pure and good

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, *Personal Talk*

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"BABY, did you ever read a book?" That's what Frances' father said to her when she objected to being moved to the sticks where some bright government official had decided to build an ammunition plant of which her father was chief whatever. Instead of living in a comfortable suburban home among a comfortable suburban crowd, Frances took up her abode in a sizable tarpaper shack without so much as a movie, store or church to break the dreary landscape. The nearest town was thirty miles away and the workers came by boxcar except the ones who must live on the grounds in temporary houses

as unprepossessing as her own. It would be possible for Frances to board a school bus and go to the township high school but who wants to start a new school in the middle of her senior year? Frances begged to stay home a semester and help her mother. Help her mother what? The family had a maid, miraculously enough, and her mother spent most of the day at the plant all steamed up about a recreational program for the lunch hours of three swing shifts. Frances did her best to be animated and co-operative and a credit to morale. But actually she was bored. She was lonely, too, and she saw no future. Plainly she was sunk.

That's when her father said, "Baby, did you ever read a book?" She did not think he was funny because she was a well-reared girl with all the advantages and she owned quite a lot of books. But the bitter truth boiled down to the dregs is that Frances had not read a book. She had not really read a book, except the Ferdinand variety with pictures, since she could remember. In her childhood her mother read to her. At school she naturally read her texts and if she had to make a book report she skimmed through a book which some chum had read and asked her chum a lot of questions and wrote the report and didn't care anyway if her grade in English was not too hot.

That first winter at the plant she began to read, out of desperation, and she read herself an education. Not intentionally, but actually She is going to be a happy and resourceful woman as surely as sparks fly up a chimney. Books do that.

But what to read. A story is told of Gertrude Stein, probably not too literal, that she once addressed an audience at International House, Chicago, on the subject of reading. She spoke for an hour and one half. Her entire lecture follows:

Without the perspective of history it is very difficult to know what is well to read without the perspective of history to know what is well to read is very difficult very difficult to know what is well to read without the perspective of history.

At the end of the lecture one of the famous scientists of the university was heard to remark fervently as if a great idea had just overwhelmed him, "It occurs to me that it is difficult to know what one should read until the centuries have receded and one may know what bears the test of time"

If discrimination in reading is a hard matter for those who stand upon the pinnacles of literature, it is no wonder the ordinary one of us is bewildered by a glance at the shelves of our town library But perhaps our first job is to decide whether or not we want to read. After all how necessary is it to be a



reading woman? Do the women we call great today spend much time on books?

Yes, they do.

Make your own list of the world's ten great women. One woman is almost certain to be included—Madame Chiang Kai-shek, First Lady of China. There is a woman whose days are *full*. Not only does she share the Generalissimo's war obligations and herself remain the motivating spirit of the air forces, but she has also the duties of the wife of the President of the republic. She builds and maintains and carries the over-all responsibility for the orphanages which care for children made homeless by the war; she works with the Red Cross, gives frequent radio broadcasts both to her own people and to foreign nations, follows the week-by-week development of the Chinese co-operative movement. She writes articles. Furthermore she keeps at least one quiet half hour each day for personal devotion and meditation. And besides all this—she reads. She reads many of the best new books in English and keeps discovering great books of the past. She also reads her Chinese classics and the new Chinese poetry, books on education, the arts, all down the line of general interest. Those who know her best, who travel with her frequently, say she always has a book tucked in her handbag and snatches the odd moments, which most of us chatter away, to read. Surely

against so many obstacles and such stiff competition for her time she does not read solely for enjoyment. Not even for education. It must be that reading does something for her, something she feels she cannot get along without.

A magazine writer—a woman—tells of going to interview Jane Addams when Miss Addams was at the height of her busy career. The reporter knew that Miss Addams' days were pretty much scheduled and she asked for only fifteen minutes to get Miss Addams' views on peace. You will recall that besides being head resident and motivating mind of Hull House, the first great settlement house in our country, Miss Addams also worked for child labor legislation, led in the development of social agencies, helped to start the first university department of social science research, took an active part in public health work, fostered legislative action to protect women in industry and gave herself to any international movement which furthered co-operation between nations. No wonder the reporter asked for only a quarter-hour interview.

When the day came, Miss Addams was confined to her room after an illness. She received the reporter cordially and the two women were soon talking hard and fast about books. Miss Addams had an anthology of new Chinese poetry from which she read lines to her visitor—those sharply silhouetted

lines which draw a personality in a phrase. She had a Russian play which she discussed volubly; she thought the plays of any country were important because they cut into the hearts and minds of the people. She had the report of a symposium on education over which she all but tore her hair. On her bedside table lay a new volume by an English philosopher, the biography of a singer, a novel by a Frenchman—and these were only her current reading. The books of previous months and years were on her shelves.

When the reporter left, her feeling of exhilaration in having spent half the morning with so stimulating a woman soon turned to discouragement. How on earth did Miss Addams get time to read so much when her days were filled with immediate pressing duties? Up at six and apparently on the go all day, accessible to anyone in need, acting on a dozen civic or national projects and still reading. The reporter knew that her own days were not half so full as Miss Addams' and yet she could scarcely find time to read a magazine. And then, a year later when she was still pondering the miracle of Miss Addams' busyness and her reading, light broke over the reporter's mind. Miss Addams carried her heavy schedule of many-sided responsibilities *because she read*. Life flowed full and free through her mind. The best of old and new thoughts were con-

stantly refreshing her. She gave out liberally because she took in liberally. Mentally she was well fed including vitamins. And so of course she had sustaining strength and a kind of quiet radiant vigor.

Best of all reasons to read a book is because the book interests you. You like the first page and you want to know what follows on the rest of the pages. You hate to lay the book down. That sort of book may be an action story and action stories are just as much girls' books as boys'. Who would think of limiting the audience for *The Count of Monte Cristo*? But the hard-to-part-from book is not necessarily a book about doings and scrapes and achievement. It may be a book about a person, a story in which you become so closely identified with the main character that even his thoughts hold you. Dreiser wrote about Clyde Griffith in that fashion, try to forget him. In some of the stories which live longest with us, nothing special happens. We meet and know some people. Whether they dwell on land or sea or in *The Cherry Orchard* matters not at all to Chekhov or to us. J. P. Marquand's *So Little Time* is a more recent example of the relatively actionless story. But do you have to have a reason for liking a book? You do not. You probably have a reason, however, or several of them, and at times you like to figure out just what it was which held you.

When is a book not worth your time? When it

adds nothing to your understanding or joy in life. Unfortunately it is easy to get caught in a maze of cheap reading, especially when one is in a slump or wanting to kill time. There isn't a more vicious phrase in the language than "to kill time" and books which do only that are books to shun. Because there are other books just as interesting which enrich time. The same thing goes for magazines. Cheap magazines are even worse than cheap books because they are easier to pick up and the number of them confuses the undiscriminating into thinking they offer variety. Take a few minutes to analyze your magazine reading. Are the stories pretty much all alike? Once the situation is set up can you guess what is bound to happen? Is the story told in the first person, beginning with regret for a great mistake but going on just the same to recount in detail the sordid entanglements which led to life's undoing? Chances are, you are just devouring printer's ink which does nothing for you. If a story gives you little to think over afterwards and if it is completely undistinguished in the manner of its telling, you are distinctly wasting your time.

And yet—a quick aside in defense of chaff. A wise but illiterate old woman who lived on a farm in Missouri and opened her spic-and-span farmhouse to paying guests once heard a city mother reprove her twelve-year-old daughter for reading so much

stuff and nonsense. "I don't understand you," said mother to daughter, "you can read good books"—she held up a copy of Dickens which the daughter had just finished—"but you also read these"—and she picked up one of the current poor-girl-marries-rich stories. Then the mother turned to the wise old woman "What would you do with a daughter like mine?"

"Leave her be," said the older woman "She's just larnin' what to spit out and what to swaller."

Even so. We all have to learn what to swaller, but we don't have to go on indefinitely chewing chaff with our wheat. If you start a book which "looks good" and find by the end of the third chapter that it is cheap stuff, don't feel you must finish what you began. You wouldn't finish a bad apple, nor even a tasteless one. To be sure, there is such a thing as age level, although it is a vastly overrated phrase, and the stories which you stayed up to read at thirteen would put you to sleep ten years later. But there are ninth-grade books which would never put you to sleep. Some of the books written for three-year-olds are also timeless and even a three-year-old is happier with that kind. You may learn to be discriminating by reading all sorts of books but be sure you are coming through with the discrimination and not merely reading all sorts of books.

## More About Books

'Tis the good reader that makes the good book,  
a good head cannot read amiss

EMERSON, *Success*

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IF YOU WANT a plan for your reading, you might try the length, breadth, and height plan. Ideas, like clothes, keep better when hung on pegs and these are three convenient pegs. For length, the books which give you the long-range view, books about the beginnings of things. They have titles about how the world began, how man began, how fire and science and art and music and all of mankind's occupations and preoccupations got under way Wells's *Outline of History* is one of the weightier, as well as one of the more readable tomes of that sort. Most biography belongs in this group too,

because we seldom write full-length accounts of people until we have the perspective of time. Irving Stone's *Lust for Life*, for instance, could never have been written while Van Gogh was living nor even immediately following his death

No writing is more modern, more distinctly marked by contemporary attitudes than biographies, although biography was old when the novel was being born. Probably it is the debunking element, as much as more comprehensive scholarship, which has brought biography into the list of best sellers. No longer do biographers feel they must cover the clay feet of their gods with laurel leaves. Sometimes they swing to the other extreme and try to trap a pair of clay-crusted boots in the mire as if that were the only place those boots ever walked. In that case the biographer sacrifices truth for royalties and does his generation a poor turn. An accurate, well-written biography has the excitement of fiction plus the fascination of fact. Catherine Bowen's story of Justice Holmes and his family *Yankee from Olympus* is a stirring example. Far stranger things happen to real people than the fiction writer dares portray in a tale and the biographer can take full advantage of that curious quirk. These days the great of all times and all professions step into your living room with an almost lifelike tread. If you want to begin with short biographies and have a flair for science, Paul



de Kruif's *Microbe Hunters* is as exciting as the day it was written.

Close kin to biography is the historical novel which has reached a high point during the past decade. *Anthony Adverse* and *Gone with the Wind* are light but lengthy reading. Louis Zara's *Against This Rock* treats an epoch in more serious detail. There is good reason for the number of historical novels. We all want to know how we got into our present mess, not only internationally speaking, but likewise socially and psychologically. So the historical novelist shows us ourselves under guise of seventeenth-century clothes or dealing with the problems of the American colonists or adjusting to the Industrial Revolution in England. And we say to ourselves in fear or in pride, "We might do that again."

Alongside the historical novels are the genuine histories which attempt to confine themselves to authenticated facts but, because they are written by moderns who think in terms of psychological motivation, make room also for the facts of people—people whose likes and dislikes, whose health, education, home life, inferiority feelings, pride and the like have influenced the path of nations and turned the currents of thoughts and of events. These books which lengthen our view also give dimension to our minds.

Then there is peg two. On peg two hang the bun-

dles of books which have to do with the breadth of life. Books about the world around us, the world we deal with every day. Books about our earth in terms of its resources, books about the stars. These books about the stars are very special for giving sweep and scope and grandeur to our days. They are factual, to be sure, but with one hand they gather up mythology which is the wisdom of the race and with the other hand they touch the new horizons of mathematics—and all within a vocabulary you can understand! This group includes also books about trees and bugs and ants and animals, about transportation and communication, about geography. Of course about geography. The modern kind of geographical book, which is seldom labeled geography, can take the Nile River and give it such individuality that it will flow through the rest of your life. George Stewart did the same thing for meteorology in *Storm*. This sort of writing is fictionized science but nonetheless true for it makes plain the way in which business and commerce, art, law and religion are changed by the environmental circumstance.

Belonging to this same social-geographic family are the reporting books. A good share of the books now being written are reportorial. Foreign correspondents tell us how things are in other parts of the world. Travelers tell us, soldiers, missionaries, wives of businessmen living abroad, even occasionally

children, write down their impressions and interpret what they see. All of them are trying to help us understand the problems of our own generation. Most of them write brightly, often cleverly, sometimes astutely. They aim to catch our interest on the first page and hold it to the last page and to make the untangling of events as fascinating as untangling a detective plot.

If we have our facts fictionized, why not have fiction factionized? And we do. We have detective stories. Characters and plot may be invented but all the trappings of science, invention and sociological background are factual. Americans like this kind of writing. It makes us feel clever. We enjoy accomplishing the impossible and helping justice to prevail and succeeding in spite of obstacles. Did you ever notice how many scientists enjoy detective stories? Maybe their clue-to-clue type of mind operates in about the same inventive fashion when running down a germ as when running down a murder.

Some good direct writing goes into detective stories these days. Also fine characterization. Was a day not so long past when detective stories were purely stories of action and the reader's interest centered entirely in what happened. But nowadays detective stories are inclined to care about the people in the story as well as the plot. Our greatest fascination lies in the working of the human mind and we insist

on knowing what makes people act the way they act, so that the writers of detective stories must make use of psychology as well as science and give us real people. Understanding the people and events around us is part of this reading for breadth.

There is still peg three waiting for the books which give us height, tallness of spirit, up-reach. These books do not have to deal with any particular field of thought or specific school of novel writing, for any kind of book may do this thing for you. However, some kinds of books are almost sure to.

Take poetry. With the fewest possible words and the most meaning, poetry lays hold on your spirit. Poets are men and women who see through events to their meaning, who see through people to their hidden longings. In the caldron of the poets' spirit experience simmers a long time and the brew they give us is heady and nourishing. You may think that modern poetry is abstruse and hard to understand. When it seems that way to you, skip it. That particular poetry is not for you—yet. But much modern poetry is direct and moving. You do not want to miss out on it. Indeed, you must not! Life's musts are very few but anyone who wishes you the best will want you to have poetry. The way to begin, if you did not begin before you were born, is to go to someone who knows poetry. Show them you and ask them what. They will come through.

Books of humor belong among these books which give height to the spirit. Not reproduction of funny-paper serials, although occasionally the authors of these strips have a sense of humor. Some cartoonists have a wonderful way of lifting the incongruities of life—the things which just do not fit together such as large anger over trivial incidents or great fuss-and-feather over really unimportant people—and letting us see our own funny selves. Every teacher should have on her desk a book to smile over and if your favorite teacher does not have one, you had better give it to her. Something of James Thurber's will do. And to some of your other friends who deal with people day by day and grow depressed, you might present a Robert Benchley.

Akin to the out-and-out books of humor are all the books with a light touch. The whimsical-minded who used to write essays are now inclined to write stories about their own neighborhood and to write with the deft touch which makes you smile and at the same time half feel like crying, over the fisherfolk of Maine or the mountaineers of Tennessee or the Dutch of Pennsylvania. You lay down that sort of book with a tender feeling for human nature.

Occasionally there is a book about religion which gives you height. Or a book about a religious person such as Sir Wilfred Grenfell in *Doctor Luke of Labrador*, or George Washington Carver in one of

the new biographies of him. Or the story of a woman doctor in Janet Miller's delightful volume *Jungles Preferred*. Maybe the book is just the story of a child or even of an animal. But you know the kind of book without its being named. It may be fact or fiction, it may deal with anything under the sun from saints to honeybees—you always know when it does that thing for you.

On which peg should we hang the "great books"—the books of all time which everybody knows—or at least knows the names of? Some of them could hang on all three pegs at once because they deal with the past, explain the present and give us a lift. Now great books were not made great by a group of scholars getting together and deciding which books should be kept on permanent shelves. They became great through being read by many ordinary people who told other people about them because they had an inner excitement. The great books present great people or great ideas—not famous people, necessarily, nor accepted ideas. Take those Greek storytellers, Aristophanes, Euripides, Sophocles, Aeschylus. Take Plato. And with them take Marian who was thirteen and a freshman in high school.

Marian wanted to go to a movie on a weekday night. Her mother always said "no" on weekday nights but Marian kept asking hopefully. This night she was particularly persistent because quite a few of

her classmates had permission to go. Her mother said, "But, Marian, that ancient history!"

Marian said, "Oh, *that*." Her tone was half groan, half moan, plus the overtone which means, "Times have changed since you were young."

Her mother began to rack her brain, which was quite apparent to Marian. She knew her mother was trying to think up some way to make homework interesting and she knew such effort was futile. She and her mother were having dinner alone and when her mother said, "What are you studying in history?" Marian was BORED. Bored but polite because she had not given up on the movie.

"The Greeks," she said. "City states, Lycurgus, law-giver of Sparta, first Olympiad, oligarchic government, Draco's code, Solon's constitution, Themistocles, Aristides, Pericles and people like that." Practically the week's outline.

"And Aristophanes!" Mother said. Her expression denoted genuine interest, not the bright look of I-must-understand-my-child.

"Never heard of him," Marian told her as firmly as she could with an entire queen olive in her mouth.

"But, Marian Beardsley, why are you studying Grecian culture if you don't know the playwrights!"

Marian was studying the culture of the Greeks for three credits. Playwrights did not feature in her life.

"Talk about a good scenario," her mother went on

as if Marian had urged her. "You couldn't beat *The Frogs*"

Well, Marian did smile when her mother got to the part about Dionysus' pretending that his slave, Xanthias, was the master and he the slave until they met the beautiful girl. Also she certainly was surprised at the frogs' chorus, "Brekekekex, ko-ax, ko-ax." She always thought that was a college yell. At the end of the story she told her mother it was swell and told herself it wouldn't make a bad movie.

Her mother moved on to Euripides and a couple of plays about a princess named Iphigenia. In the midst of doing dishes her mother went to the bookcase, took down a copy of Greek tragedies and read the speech in which Iphigenia recognizes her brother, Orestes, just before she is supposed to preside at his sacrifice. Marian decided the speeches needed cutting but that if Greta Garbo came out of retirement she could do the part in a big way.

"There is one story better than anything the playwrights wrote," Mother said as they went upstairs. By this time Marian had given up the movie. No use. She might as well listen to her mother's book as to drag forth her own. Her mother turned to the chapter called *Phaedo* in *The Dialogues of Plato*. She read the story of the last day of Socrates . . . the consternation of his friends, his own calm assurance, the grief of the jailer; the final moments after he had



drunk the poison hemlock and then suddenly remembered that he owed a friend a cock and asked Crito to pay the debt.

"'The debt shall be paid,' said Crito. 'Is there anything else?'

"There was no answer to this question. . . . Such was the end, Echecrates, of our friend, whom I may truly call the wisest, and justest, and best of all the men whom I have ever known"

When Mother laid down the book, tears were on her face. On Marian's, too. They didn't care. Marian got to wondering why great and good people have to suffer. Both of them got talking. By and by Marian went to bed. Her mother came in to open the window and suchlike. "Listen, Mom," Marian said, "I don't want you to think I had as good a time as I would have had at the movie." Her mother didn't say anything, just kind of chuckled. She knew how long most movies stay in the mind. And how long Plato.

At present Marian is a college freshman taking a course known as the humanities survey. She "has" to read that book of Plato's. The other day on her way to the library it occurred to her that if she didn't have to read it and if her mother had not happened to read it to her, she would have missed out entirely in knowing a man she has thought of a thousand times since war began: Socrates, wise, good and innocent, drinking hemlock because he believed it right to stand by

law and principle. Some men, Marian thought to herself, are doing the same thing now.

Great books are inclined to help set up the traditions we all live by, both as individuals and as nations. Also they tie the generations together just as communities are tied by a common road or telephone line. They help us to talk across the centuries. Back in Queen Elizabeth's time a quaint record tells us, "The noble Lady Jane Grey being asked by Sir Roger Asham why she lingered to read Plato in Greek while the lords and ladies of the court were pleasuring in the park, replied, 'I wist all their sport in the park is but a shadow of the pleasure I find in Plato. Alas! poor folk, they never felt that good pleasure meaneth.'" At the time of her remark the Lady Jane was fifteen years old. What difference a little span of four hundred years? She and Marian are practically sisters.

Some of the great books, frankly, are hard going. All of Plato is not story. But many of the great books are no harder to read than to read about the way one usually does while trying to get what is called an education. And you will be glad all your life if you take them firsthand.

Now and then it's a good idea to read a book you can't understand—and then understand it. That does not mean to choose a book just because it makes no sense to you, but choose a book about a subject you really want to know, say psychology. Or choose a book

by an author you want to get acquainted with, say Thomas Mann, and sail in. Even if you plug along for six months it doesn't matter because at the end of that time you will have made a big step forward. One big step does more for you, sometimes, than a corresponding number of little steps. But when you have finished the book, if you conclude that Thomas Mann is wordy and does not have much to say—be frank about your reaction. Whatever you do, whenever, whyever, don't pretend about books: Like 'em or leave 'em but express your own opinion.

From all this talk about writers you might think that authors were entirely responsible for books. Actually the illustrator, especially in this day of distinguished illustrations, may say as much and say it as convincingly and as lingeringly as the writer. Robert Lawson is one such. Learn to know the illustrators if you do not want to miss half the pleasure of your books. And you might even take note of the publisher for the personality of the publishing house determines the kind of books you are going to get. The publisher likewise determines the format of your books—the way they are printed, the kind of paper and type used, the binding, the jacket, all the things which can make a book a pleasure to hold, read and cherish.

But don't let anyone—publisher, author, illustrator, reviewer or teacher—persuade you to read only a cer-

tain type of book. Keep your mind free to shop around. Buy a magazine you never read before, something out of your usual line. Read a book you do not agree with. If you are used to reading only novels, try biography. If you never read a novel, try six. The thing is to keep your mind open and alive. That's the big idea about reading as you have probably already discovered. If you read

Men and books? The perfect combination! Reading aloud by the fire on a winter's evening . . . under a tree on a summer afternoon . . . on ship deck riding the seven seas. Men and books? Tops!

## Homework (*How to Study*)

There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given him to till

EMERSON, *Self-Reliance*



SINCE YOU MAY HAVE a living to make, not to mention a life, you'd like to feel that tomorrow won't be just another yesterday. You wish your future would unroll like a technicolor film without any effort on your part but actually you realize that your future is more like a mural which you have to paint yourself. Therefore you've decided to take a course in something and build up your capital investment—meaning yourself. The money you put in the bank is all right in its way; it will probably pay you four to eight per cent depending on luck, wisdom and inflation. But the money you put into your head by way of tuition and college courses or night school or correspondence

classes or lectures or a concert series—that money pays anywhere from fifty to a thousand per cent

If you want a book of figures to support that statement you needn't look to Grandmother's Spencertian copybook but merely flip the pages of *Who's Who*. Did you ever really read *Who's Who*? It's that thick red tome in every library and it contains the names and life stories—condensed to a few lines—of persons who have achieved distinction along many lines. Living people in the U S A. No one can buy his way into this volume; he has to rate his way in. Out of our one hundred forty millions population, a few thousand land on those pages. A commencement speaker's classical method of demonstrating that a college education pays is to invite the student to read *Who's Who*, jotting down the number of individuals who got themselves a college education or its equivalent, and then figure percentages. You'll come out just where the commencement speaker meant for you to come out—with the conviction that education pays.

However, when you decide to help yourself to a slice of education—anything from nurses' aid to collating Aramaic manuscripts—then you have homework on your hands. At any level school and homework, like bread and butter, Amos and Andy, Mother and Father, just naturally come along together. The difference is that you can substitute for

butter, snap off Amos and Andy, wheedle at least one parent, but if you mean to make a success of classes then homework is a problem you can't ignore. It is a fact of life like hunger and the tax on cold cream. You have to do something about homework. The question is: what?

Once you answer that question honestly, no matter what the answer is, then the worst is over. You know where you stand with yourself. Deciding on your attitude toward homework is the toughest of all jobs connected with education, and if you don't believe that, just look around at the number of your friends who have never decided.

There are three possible primary answers. First, there is the skip-it school of thought. Those who hold this point of view feel that homework is something to be dipped into as lightly as possible and still make a grade which permits them to stay in school. Homework, they feel, should not interfere with the more important pursuits such as sports, dates and other recreations. This is a thoroughly logical point of view for those who expect to live the life of a lichen, drawing their sustenance from someone else's labor. Also for those who have no creative drive, no concern for their fellows, no patriotism at this time when the world needs all we can contribute. And, of course, the skip-its have no imagination.

Fay Minerva belongs to this skip-it crowd. All of

her sixteen years her mother has waited on her, her father has babied her, her girl friends have flattered her to keep her good-natured, and quite a few boys follow her around because she has incredibly long eyelashes and a hospitable refrigerator at home. Most of the time she is a rather pleasant person in a trite way but a waste of the taxpayers' money. She will never study a lick more than is absolutely necessary and the man who marries her is going to find he has an awful load to drag around. There are quite a few such bits of human driftwood stranded on the educational beaches

Second in the home-study field, there is the large conclave of somewhats. These are the homework acrobats who try to travel in two directions at the same time. Eleanor belongs to this group. One day she takes all her books home and does a thorough job of lesson-getting. The next three days she lives on her memories. Hence she is always torn between success and failure, never achieving a reputation for the former and never escaping a reputation for the latter. She can't make up her mind whether she wants to belong to the rabble who pride themselves on never studying or to the proud court who pick off the honors. She has enough native ability to make the honor roll but enough dizzy-mindedness to squander her time. Because she can't make up her mind, her grades are scarcely average and her en-



thusiasm for school sags whenever six weeks' tests roll around

Third, there are the members of the clear-headed group who, through training, luck, or the gift of common sense, have made up their minds what school is all about and have decided to pay the price of getting where they want to go. All through life the trick is to know what you want and whether you are willing to pay what it costs, just so you get what you are after. That is why it is important to make up your mind what you really want—so you won't pay for the wrong thing. Some of the smartest students in any college belong to this group but somehow it isn't their smartness which makes them seem significant. It's a kind of authenticity which the dumbest of us recognizes, respects and ties to.

Helen belongs to this group who thinks school is worth the midnight oil even if it has to be burned in the daytime. She has a good but not brilliant mind, she is pretty in a lively way and in spite of eleven freckles on her nose. Her clothes are smart rather than expensive. She likes a gay time and believes that knowing her lessons is part of the real fun. When Helen was a freshman she thought it out, she says, and decided she wanted some genuine knowledge so she could go around with interesting people and maybe marry a lawyer. Also she wanted some of the skills which come with education. "I just looked

around and saw that the girls who made the grade at school seemed to manage better, whether it's their jobs, their husbands or their households. Some girls have to manage all three and they can." Thus Helen started high school with her mind made up on the homework business. And once a girl is sure why she is going to school, then it is comparatively easy to swing her homework habits into line.

But having decided whether to do homework sketchily, moderately, or thoroughly, the next question is: where? Unfortunately there is no simple answer for all kinds of students. Educators used to cry with one voice, "Study in a quiet place." But recent experiments seem to prove that some types of minds actually achieve better concentration when someone is practicing the piano, or when the radio is playing or when people are talking—but not about something particularly interesting. In other words, some people can focus their attention better when something is going on around them. A constitutional psychologist trained in these matters can almost tell at a glance whether or not you belong to this group. If you do, the chances are about four out of five that you do not sleep on a pillow, that you like sunshine and that if you built your ideal house you would build on a hill with a view! Lacking expert opinion, your only other choice is to experiment on yourself. Try various places to study.

Go into the living room where Dad is listening to the radio, spread out your books, get your lessons. At the end of two weeks' trial, take stock of the results. Then try two weeks of quiet study alone in your own room, as free from noise as possible. Ask yourself this: After you got used to being alone, did you work faster and better in the silence? If you have extremely alert, high-gearred mental equipment, the chances are that you will love, honor and cherish the solitude.

Or perhaps you may find the school library the best place for you. A library has the advantage of reasonable quiet and pleasing surroundings with everyone else occupied at homework. Studying in the same place day after day is a help for most people. Same room, same desk, same chair. Let your habits work for you. Also give yourself a break in choosing a place that is warm enough for comfort but not too warm for keen-mindedness. See that your light is good and the air fresh.

There are times, and the duration is probably one of them, when it is not always possible to get ideal conditions for studying. In a fuel shortage there may be no heat in your room. Indeed, in some beautiful and otherwise comfortable homes the whole family has to huddle around the fireplace. Or perhaps your family has moved into a small apartment while Dad is gone. You have to share a room with a chatterer. Or you don't have a desk of your own. If you can't

have ideal conditions, don't let that little drawback throw you off your stride. After all, Abraham Lincoln read by the light of a pine knot and the Brontë sisters studied by candlelight—or did you think those were moving picture effects? Eskimos study in igloos and get the same lessons you get. Chinese universities meet in caves and their students turn out top work. Just ignore your present obstacles; they only make the next obstacle look smaller.

Wherever you decide is the best place to study, one thing is certain—there never was a student who could do a good job of studying if she let herself be continually interrupted by the telephone or by any other sort of friendly visits. If you are off at a twenty-four-hour school, meaning boarding school, there will be rules to take care of interruptions during study hours. There will also be ways to get around those rules. There are always the popper-inners who think it clever to get out of their room and into someone else's room regardless of someone else's studying. If you are at home without benefit of house rules, you have to be adult enough to tell your mother and your friends that you don't answer telephone calls from seven to nine-thirty. Fire alarms, yes; chummy chats, no. And having taken your stand, don't treat yourself to a few intoxicating exceptions. Even if you have to anchor yourself to a cement block, stay by that desk.

What, where, and then *how* Some persons seem to be born knowing how to get their lessons in the shortest time with the least expenditure of energy. They are the natural organizers Others appear to be born klutzes who never can get themselves together in one place, mood and intention. In between these extremes of mental endowment are the rest of us who really have to study to learn and learn to study. We are the ball bearings who make the world go around and so it matters a lot that we stick to the track and keep things spinning

**Procedure** Start first on your most interesting assignment because it takes a while to get your thoughts together and they flock faster toward feed they like. Even so, you probably read two sentences and then—my stars!—you forgot to tell Jeanette that the designs have come for the class stationery. You leap from your chair—and then you leap back into your chair, take up your note pad and jot down a reminder to call her as soon as your homework is finished You do exactly the same thing with every other intrusive thought which yammers for immediate action—just jot it on a memorandum Then first thing you know, your mind decides that you mean business and you are studying. It's a great thing to know how to clear the periphery of your mind and—yes, that's the word: concentrate.

Many persons feel it is a good idea to read a lesson

through once as fast as possible and still catch its drift. That's what the first quick reading is for—hitting the high points, getting the general idea, providing yourself an outline to hang ideas on. Some lessons, or at least some source books, never need anything but this quick once-over. It's important to know what not to spend too much time on because it is possible to get into a bad habit of doing some things too thoroughly. But mighty few people have this particular bad habit.

Most lessons have to have a second reading during which your mind gathers the material around the main points, fits the examples to the theory they illustrate and adds a few illustrations of your own, assembles the dates and other figures. Some students prefer to make the first reading the thorough one and the second reading a skim-over to make sure they got it all. In either case, after the second reading you are ready to make an outline—in your head if you have the trust born of training, on the margin of your book if you can review by key words, or in a notebook if you want to be sure you have everything pinned down and easy to find when you are ready for review.

The final touch is to tell someone what you have learned. Take turns with your roommate or with a friend in reviewing your history while you are giving your crowning glory those hundred strokes of the

brush; let her rehearse her botany lesson while you both do your nails. Or save the interesting points of your lessons for table conversation. Try the assignment in civics on your parents. They are not likely to do so well on math problems, especially while eating. Ask your family what *they* would write for an inquisitive English teacher who wanted to know the most exciting moment of *their* lives. And if no one wants to listen while you review your lessons, just invent an ideal listener—tall, handsome and self-made who never had a chance to go to college—and honor him with a review as you walk along the street. The point is that it's a Great Boon to be able to tell what you have just learned. It points up what you have just not quite learned.

Mathematics and languages have rules of their own when it comes to homework but they profit by the same underpinning of regularity and determination. Furthermore, they have the advantage of some easy extra helps. If you are trying to learn Spanish or Choctaw like a native, make a habit of writing your daily vocabulary on a file card and carrying a week's cards in your purse. You'll be amazed how many times you can pull out those cards and give the vocabulary the quick once-over. Now that so many boys are in the intelligence service or some other service studying the languages of every place under the sun, it is a good thing to know short cuts to

learning a language. Some of these young men may be stationed abroad for quite some time and *you* may be the secretary or the bride on location.

Back home in school, though, remember that the card system is also good for learning theorems in geometry, rules in physics or grammar, formulas for chemistry, dates of history.

Frankly, the big secret of homework lies hidden in the word itself. The word, we note, is *home* and *work*. *Home*, meaning your own place, safe from the cockeyed world, and *work*, meaning—you jolly well knew what all the time.

Euripides—remember him in 484-406 B.C.?—has a saying called fragment 927 which reads, "Whoso neglects learning in his youth, loses the past and is dead for the future."



## *ing a New Habit Stick*

the easy as though it were difficult,  
difficult as though it were easy, the first,  
confidence make you careless, and the  
last faint-heartedness make you afraid  
to do nothing, it needs but to be  
done

EAR GRAECIAN, *A Truth-telling Manual*

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W LEAF comes natural to human beings,  
the air on a frosty morning, turning the  
someone comes late to a meeting, or  
when the bugle blows. It is one of the  
men keeps on doing so long as life is on

new habits. Something about a new calendar and the end of the Christmas festivities makes us want to pull in the belt a notch, take a deep breath and start. A birthday is another good time for stocktaking and setting up new habits. Moving into a new neighborhood gives one some of the same impetus, or starting to a new school. But you don't have to wait for a significant occasion to make a significant change. Any day you decide to take on a new habit with the idea of making it stick—that day is a big day for you.

When it comes to the habit business, all the world is divided into two kinds of people: those whose resolutions knit into the pattern of their lives and those whose resolutions ravel out. Every school, even a bushman's kindergarten, has some of each kind. But no one person is guaranteed to be the same kind all her life. You may be a raveler for years and then someday take yourself in hand and begin to knit up the loose ends of your personality. Or you may be a success for years and then drop a stitch and start to ravel. This sort of tragedy can happen but it is not common because the woman who has built up the habit of making habits stick is a woman with a trained will and a trained will seldom deserts its trainer.

You know how the resolution business works. Take Susie Brown, president of the freshman class. On last New Year's Eve she resolved to administer

the good old hundred strokes a day to her fine auburn hair which had become a little streaked. Simple thing—but every day! Well, she did it. Rushed on sleepy, she stuck to her new habit. And now just as she expected her hair, shining and soft, is a good ad for her hairbrush. Or take Maurine Chapelle—if you want her. She resolved to keep away from sweets and to spend ten minutes a day on exercises for over-hefty hips. She stuck to her resolve for a week and had half the girls on her dormitory corridor one-two-three-ing with her. But then . . . came a week-end visitor . . . and a birthday cake. However, Maurine started over . . . until someone gave a spread. And now—she still has overhefty hips. She could kid herself with alibis but she couldn't kid her figure. Unfortunately it was dependent upon her dependability.

New habits operate under laws as sure as the laws which govern the vibrational energy of sound. But just as you don't need to know all the laws of sound to make a radio work for you, so, too, you don't need to know all the psychological principles of habit to make your habits work for you. Four easy steps!

First, if you want a new habit to stick, get a clear picture of *yourself* so that you can be sure this new resolution belongs to you. It is silly for Annabelle, a gay little person whose feet fairly twinkle as she walks, to resolve to cultivate the habit of walking with slow dignity. To be sure, the teacher she adores

does walk like a queen but the teacher is built like a queen and her temperament is geared to slow grace. Annabelle could never achieve that particular kind of charm. Why should she? But if she studied herself, petite Annabelle could develop her own charm.

So if you want to make a change in your personality pattern, first take yourself off to a quiet spot and gaze into a full-length mirror while you give yourself an honest analysis. Look at your natural assets and liabilities of form and character, then draw up the *you* of your dreams. Take plenty of time. Think about tomorrow and next month and the years ahead. You are not throwing together a week-end shack but building a long-time home for your own aristocratic spirit. You wouldn't want to remember wall plugs but forget the plumbing or devote so much space to the game room that you won't have any place for a nursery. It takes the same care to build a self. Consider your contemplated new habits as possible permanent fixtures and make sure they won't look tinny when a sharp masculine eye comes looking for someone to cherish for life.

Of course, being a versatile and complicated human, you will find many *selves* inside your personality, but that's all right providing they have a core of consistency which is your essential self. Nobody cares a lot for the girl who changes her entire personality upon the arrival of each new screen

magazine. Her friends say, "Another act." On the other hand, a girl may honestly have a dozen sides to her if all those sides represent honest interests, just as a well-cut emerald may have many facets.

It's important not to underestimate yourself when you're drawing up a long-time you. Most of us have a too low ceiling of expectation for ourselves. We see a beautiful young woman and say to ourselves, "Oh, I could never be like that." Why not? When you look at her closely, it may not be her features which give that effect. Perhaps her mouth is wider than yours but it is mobile and expressive. Maybe she had to eat right and exercise and even sleep eight hours a night to get that skin. Maybe you could be beautiful, too, if you just expected yourself to be. Give your expectations some support. A violinist does thousands of miles of bowing before he gets the habit of good technique—but that's just part of a high standard of performance. Don't think for a minute that Madame Curie is the only woman who will give the world a miracle of science; she just had high expectations for herself and kept on sifting her tons of pitchblende.

High expectations can change the world beginning with yourself. When Napoleon faced heavy odds in his battle for Egypt he gathered his soldiers in the shadow of the pyramids and addressed them. "Gentlemen," he said, "twenty centuries look down

on you." They were moved to a man by their little general's high expectations. Well—you are the general and the soldiers, both. More than twenty centuries have gone into your breeding and all of them unite to undergird your effort if you just expect enough of yourself

So measure your new habit against your own long-time, spare-nothing, full-length portrait of *you*. Then if you are sure the new habit belongs to you—go ahead.

Second, make only a few resolves at a time. You can't cultivate an entire set of new habits at once. Remember those pages in your diary written in the plump handwriting of the fifth grade when a single set of New Year's resolutions would have reformed the whole family if not the country? That was all right at the time because if the very young did not aspire to change the world all at once, who would? But sometimes we get further when we try less. Grandmother's copybook had it—"One thing well done."

Comes New Year's Eve—or maybe the night before your mother is starting off on a long trip leaving the household management, the checkbook, your father's well-being and the fall's entertainment in your care—and you sit by the embers taking stock for the weeks ahead. Pencil in hand, you list twenty-two improvements you would like to make in yourself.

But common sense tells you that you cannot concentrate in twenty-two directions at once. So, still hoping for the twenty-two, you finally pick out three changes which would mean most to your life right now. Three new habits which you are bound to make your own. You condense your three reforms into three words and write them down (1) Posture, (2) Neatness, (3) Reading. Then you go into a huddle with yourself and plan a way to make these three new habits effective in your daily life.

This is your third step—fitting your new habits into your busy days. For instance, posture. You know you slump and you don't want to look like a walking cadaver. You know the dancing master is right when he says you cannot have grace without good carriage. You know the gym teacher is right when she says no girl can expect suddenly to float like a princess at the Junior Prom where a moving picture producer is scouting for new material *if* that girl goes around all day from home to school and class to class, swaggering a loose-jointed hippy gait. However, you also know that when you are tearing off to a basketball game you won't be thinking of posture. At least you hope you'll have your mind on something taller and handsomer than that. So maybe, all in all, you conclude that the best time to concentrate on posture is while walking to school. If you could walk correctly for nine blocks twice or four times a day, you would

soon be headed for success because your muscles—bless 'em—find that the right way is the pleasant way. After a little practice, they will pull you into shape when you've forgotten about them.

Neatness This sweet new habit you are taking on for your mother's sake. At least that is what you tell yourself tonight. Personally, you don't think it matters much to the future of nations whether your pajamas are hung up or draped over a chair. And yet—and yet if every room looked like your room, the house or dorm would not long remain such a popular place to come to. And you do admit to yourself that if you had a home of your own and were not able to keep it looking any neater than your own room now looks, why—you wouldn't blame your husband for moving to the club.

You decide that the best time to set your room in order is the last quarter hour before you go to bed. You like to stir around a bit after lessons are done and somehow you seem to move faster at night. Besides, it's something blissful to crawl into bed and watch the moonlight beam through the window onto empty chairs and a desk so clean it positively reflects the moonshine. Then in the morning it is easy to give the room a swish with dust mop and dustcloth while the bath water is running. You whisk into your clothes, make your bed, grab your books and swoop down to breakfast yodeling like the Valkyries in full



tilt because nothing gives one the triumphant lofty lift of a well-kept room.

As for reading, you are no longer going to be a moocher of ideas which other people get from books. There must be something in that five-foot bookshelf notion of spending twenty minutes a day on a grand book. You decide that you will take your twenty minutes right after dinner at night before you begin to study. But think twice—do you mean to stick? Will you lay down the book and pick up the radio when a special program comes on? Will you decide to take a walk tonight and then read forty minutes tomorrow night and then——? How badly do you want this new habit anyway?

Once you get your new habits planned and planted, the fourth step is to begin and keep going. Accept no excuses from yourself. At first it pays to give up something you want a lot rather than skip a beat in hammering the new habit into place. Give yourself every physiological aid in making your muscles co-operate with your good intentions. Then give yourself every psychological aid. Let your friends know about the new habits so that their expectations and their occasional reminders will help buoy you up. Post reminders to yourself in the form of a note on your mirror, the alarm clock's bell, a picture upside down—anything which aids your lazy subconscious in finding out you mean business. If you make one

slip, just take hold again and keep on going. Don't think your ambitions are too small to pray over. Those who have attained the finest self-direction, including Socrates, attest a power greater than themselves which comes to their aid.

Socrates, by the way, had genuine understanding of this business of being able to count on the will after it is trained and seasoned. In his last talk with his friends, just before he drank the poison hemlock decreed by the Athenian jury, he quoted Homer's account of Odysseus reprimanding his own desires and fears—

He beat his breast, and thus reproached his heart:

Endure, my heart, far worse thou hast endured!

And so, if your heart grows weary and lets you down once in the process of establishing a new habit, shut the door to your own room—yourself inside the room—and beat your own breast or your head or maybe the pillow on your bed until you get the idea back in place. You *will* finish the thing you've started and make this new habit yours! It is big business making a self you can live with proudly.

## *Unsticking an Old Habit*

Self-trust is the first secret of success, the belief that, if you are here, the authorities of the universe put you here, and for cause, or with some task strictly appointed you in your constitution, and so long as you work at that you are well and successful.

EMERSON, *Success*

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BREAKING AN OLD HABIT requires a slightly different procedure from forming a new one. Sometimes the two go together—you break an old habit by forming a new one. In remaking your posture or cultivating neatness in place of disorder, you are breaking an old habit by forming a new one.

But suppose you are only out to break a habit without putting a related habit in its place. Perhaps you have acquired the jolly custom of scratching your ear while you talk with people; you don't care to substitute scratching your chin. Or perhaps you are given to crossing your knees the instant you sit

down, no matter where or when, or to chewing gum while you study or daintily nibbling your fingernails while you listen to a concert—but you can name the thousand silly little habits which make us appear slightly subnormal to an onlooker. Maybe you want to quit smoking cigarettes

Now probably the easiest way to break the cigarette habit is to take up cigars or a pipe instead, or to learn to chew snuff. But maybe those substitutes are out for you because you are giving up cigarettes on the recommendation of a doctor who thinks that nicotine is no aid to your high-gearred nervous system. Or maybe your father is one of the old-fashioned kind who thinks that cigar smoking seldom makes strictly kissable girls. So you've got to break with tobacco entirely.

The first point is: do you mean business? Do you have a real reason for quitting? Does the reason convince you deeply enough so that your heart is in the habit-breaking process? A good reason for breaking a habit need not be a scientific reason or a moral reason but just a reason which seems sufficient to you in the light of your own plans for your own personality. If you know you mean business, then the next step is to analyze your problem.

In cigarette smoking you have to make allowance for the physiological tug as well as for the motor reactions. Your system is used to its quota of nicotine

and if you neglect to supply this very poisonous alkaloid—to quote the dictionary—your system will remind you by pulling on the thousand doorbells of your nerves. At first you may haughtily remark, "Listen, system, your daily supply of  $C_{10}H_{14}N_2$  is out, sec? Off the boards, gone with the wind and faded from the memory of man, sec?" But your system will not see—right off. It will haggle. Best to decide ahead of time whether you are going to rock the baby or let it cry itself to sleep. Do you offer your system a few puffs or have you decided to be surgical in the matter?

There are two schools of thought on this step in the process. One school holds that the wear and tear on *you* is less if you taper off gradually. Then your nerves will only sob silently instead of howling in rage. One less cigarette each day until one from one leaves nothing. And then no flirting along after that. The other school of thought holds that the way to quit is to quit. If a gangrenous leg has to come off, they say, there's no use amputating an inch a day. Probably there is no final settlement of the question. You decide which way seems easiest and surest for you.

Once you've studied the physiological angle and settled on your own procedure, then it is a Big Help to analyze your motor activities, meaning all the unconscious actions which make up the habit of

smoking. Ordinarily you come into your room, take a cigarette out of the box on the table, reach for an ash tray on the desk, strike a match and lop down on your chaise longue. But now you want to cut the chain of action which leads to the first puff. So you put the cigarette box on the top shelf of your closet—empty—and plop the ash trays into a desk drawer from which they can be extracted for visitors only. You take your boxes of matches to the kitchen and present them to the cook or to your small brother, the matchbox collector. Then you do not lop into your beloved chaise longue to enjoy your misery. No, you lop onto the bed which is not associated in your mind with smoking. Or you borrow Gramma's good old rocking chair and tny that for a while. Thus the associated chain of actions is broken and you are, in a sense, substituting new habits for old.

But when you first stop smoking, your hands are bound to feel restless—accustomed as they are to the comfortable little business of lighting, holding, flicking a cigarette. What will you do with two hands which feel like twenty when they have nothing to do? Maybe you take up knitting or tatting or sketching or doodling or making ravel-end towels. Maybe you get so low that you offer to darn the family socks. A little awkward, though, carrying the family mending basket back and forth to classes. And who will say that the constant never-say-rest knitting

addicts are nervously much ahead of the smokers? True, they do not swallow their knitting and get keratin or suint poisoning but sometimes the hapless looker-on wishes they would. If you treat your hands to a new habit, don't make it another obsession

Also your mouth is bound to feel restless. Now Freud can give you some interesting sidelights on all the mouth habits which are related to an infant's sucking. Go ahead and read up if you can take it. Or choose a short cut and give your mouth a temporary peppermint or stick of gum. TEMPORARY. Or brush your teeth again or whistle or run a white-hot railway spike through both cheeks—any little thing to keep your lips from dwelling on their lost habit

Make a game of your habit breaking. A game with only one outcome: you win. If you want to go medical and show yourself what you are missing, soak your remaining cigarettes in water and see what an effective insecticide you have. And if you have taken liberties with your habit-breaking regime you may feel as if you are the insect. But at that point you pour the aqueous solution down the drain and remind yourself that twenty years hence when you are telling your children how you broke off cigarette smoking you will only remember that you succeeded. The temporary failures will be incidental.

When you have broken such a habit as smoking

you have done a whale of a lot bigger job than rid your system of a bit of neat slow poison. You have got your will power scientifically in hand. Where you want it. The next habit breaking will be easier whether it is a big habit such as putting off lessons or just a worrisome little habit such as breaking into safes.

After you have developed some skill in getting rid of an old habit and taking on a new one, living becomes easier all down the line. You feel less dependent upon other people. You dare to take on entirely new interests. It no longer matters how amazing a new ambition seems to other people if you yourself know that you are a sticker-atter. A sense of achievement undergirds you. A girl who can make a new self is a woman who can make a new world, the new world we are caring so much about right now. And we cannot make that new world until we can do better in remaking ourselves.



## *Escape Devices*

And also when I think on mine innumerable  
faults, the which I have made myself before this  
time in words and deeds for default of know-  
ing, me thinketh then, if I would be held ex-  
cused by God for mine ignorant faults, that I  
should charitably and pitifully hold other men's  
ignorant words and deeds always excused  
And surely else do I not to others as I would  
they did to me

*The Cloud of Unknowing* Written by  
an unknown English monk around the  
middle of the fourteenth century

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"WHEN I THINK ON mine innumerable faults"—that is the one thing that you nor I nor anyone else can bear to do. The last attitude we care to assume toward our innumerable faults and our innumerable problems is one of thoughtful consideration. In fact we contrive the most cunning expedients to keep ourselves from facing up to problems and outwizard an Edison when it comes to inventing escape devices.

Now why is that? Why are we not eager to see our own faults, weaknesses, inconsistencies? Why do we not confess?

with the notion of finding their solution? Why, since it is the ability to think which marks *Homo sapiens* from the rest of the animals, do we not take pleasure in using the forebrain?

One simple reason is that our old ways are comfortable. Even when they are uncomfortable, they are comfortable! Human beings have terrific lag when it comes to breaking a habit pattern and doing something different. Don't ever imagine, for instance, that primitive woman was glad to lay aside the open fire for a stove. Doubtless, the woman who invented the first inside cooking oven was greatly pleased with her ingenuity—or her husband's—and she had herself a lot of fun. But for every neighbor who rushed in to try out the new stove and hurry home to make one like it, there were sixteen neighbors who preferred to go right on cooking over campfires. They knew the ways of a campfire and in spite of the inconveniences of rain and wind their old habits sufficed. Sometimes they even went so far as to doubt, aloud, whether a cookstove was "right." After all, they would say, the open fire served our mothers. What could a good woman want to save time and energy *for*? By implication, the new invention was not quite moral. Actually, of course, it was "better" or "worse" only in relation to a woman's evaluation of her time, temper and skill but it had a dreadful social handicap in being *different*. We all

like our old ways. And we find multitudinous escape devices to keep from facing new ways.

Perhaps it is true also that the most energetic of us have lazy streaks. We protect ourselves from work, as well as from change. Correcting our faults and solving our problems is work. Plain work. Better we should cover our faults, evade them, escape from looking too closely at them; anything except make a genuine change in the structure of the self. The odd thing is that we often work harder at escaping ourselves than we would need to work to rebuild ourselves.

But human beings are not alone in this side-stepping business. Apparently all nature has the same tug between the easy way of keeping in the good old rut and the difficult way of working out a problem. Withering on the stem was easier for the sunflower, just for instance, than having to turn its head up all day to drink in the sun's rays. No doubt a thousand thousand sunflowers did wither before a few developed the gumption for heliotropic exertion. Growth nearly always means exertion.

Another reason we try to escape from the reality of our problems is because we fear the unknown. Fear has dogged man's footsteps since he first attempted to push beyond the ape paths. In many ways fear is the greatest obstacle to progress and deserves a full consideration it seldom receives. If

you just want to know how fearful you are of facing problems, consider a toothache. Fine product of evolution that we are, most of us would rather sit home and suffer over a pain we are used to than get up and go to a dentist and face the fearful possibilities of an unknown future.

And then there is our pride. Our snug, smug pride which fits us, faults and all, like a tailored topcoat. Or more like a princess slip molded to every bulge. If we let ourselves believe that we are as riddled with defects as a tree finished off by a woodpecker—well, we just don't let ourselves believe any such. Our pride throws a protective smoke screen around us while we escape.

But why not develop a clever set of escape devices and proceed to detour all realities we do not like? Because escape devices keep us from growing. And as soon as we stop growing we begin to die. Looking around at other people, we know how true it is that men and women who escape their problems remain, at best, in a static condition. The escapists are made of the same psychological materials as realists just as a log is made of the same wood as a tree. Only a log doesn't grow and a tree does. That is, a tree grows so long as it meets its problems.

What are the common escape devices for which it might pay us to be on the watch? The most extreme is the escape through death. Comparatively

few persons purposefully take that escape but practically everyone has contemplated it at some time. Not too seriously, perhaps, and not too sadly, but almost every girl has sometime lain in bed and mused in this fashion "So my parents think I can go on living like this, hounded and nagged at every turn. Not allowed to go around with my own crowd, having to come in hours before anyone else, treated like a baby I can't go on with this intolerable life. Why should I? And when my father comes in and finds me lying here in my last cold sleep, he will realize that I have suffered an emotional cruelty more fatal than physical blows." Then we gaze on the sad picture of our family's grief and our friends' consternation. Maybe the tears run down our pillow and we sob into the darkness.

Well, that's fine, if it only happens about twice between ten and twenty, because it gives us a nice clean washed-out feeling probably followed by a good night's sleep and a better day tomorrow. The urge to gaze wistfully, but not unhappily, at our own escape from life may last a little longer when it is built around a boy friend who prefers a blonde or someone who apparently has something we haven't got including the boy friend. This wish to be dead is not a serious escape so long as we recognize it for what it is. And after it is once pointed out we

do recognize it which means that it does not work so well the next time.

There is, however, a genuine will to die that is less obvious. It is not the will to die all at once, but the will to escape reality by consistently refusing to meet its problems. Some psychologists hold that frequently this sort of will to die almost cancels out the will to live with the consequence that many of us advance only a snail's journey in a lifetime. Other psychologists talk about the will to return to the mother, to recover again the warm protection of the mother's body which the infant knew before birth. Certainly the desire for complete cushioning from reality is strong in many otherwise capable people and they escape through the revolving door of schizophrenia into a dream world in which they imagine themselves to be Cleopatra or Julius Caesar or Joseph Stalin or Bette Davis or Frank Sinatra or someone else who seems to them to have power and success.

There is another obvious escape device which is purely geographical—and less serious. The individual merely becomes a migrant running away to a new place. Girls at boarding schools sometimes concentrate on this device. They fail in their lessons or in social adaptation and so, come second semester, they transfer to another school. Then next year to another. Their problem goes with them, of course,

right along with their clothes and pin-ups. Some rich widows also utilize the geographical escape by traveling back and forth across the seven seas when we have seas to travel on. They are trying to get away from the fact that their lives are useless as soon as the façade of busy-work, behind which they hid as long as their husbands needed a home, is taken from them. Sometimes lawmakers escape by the geographical loophole, also writers, and even governments in exile. Not that all geographical maneuvering is escape. There is a difference between running away from a problem to keep from facing it and going off to get perspective on the problem or to retank energy to meet it. If you don't know which you are doing, find a doctor or a teacher or a parent who can tell you.

One of the best old escape devices is illness, ranging all the way from stomach ulcer—a prime favorite—to headache. This device frequently gets under way in childhood. A very young child discovers that when she has a stomach ache she may stay home from kindergarten. Comes a day when she is supposed to take part in a program for parents—but she is afraid of visitors. Stomach ache to the rescue! Seldom does she figure out, “Now if I can just work up the outward motions which I go through when I have a stomach ache then this ruse will save me.” Rather, her subconscious, to borrow

another term beloved of some psychologists, comes to the rescue. For all practical purposes she really gets the stomach ache. But an hour later when it is too late to go to kindergaiten, the pain disappears.

As these words are being written there are several girls in the infirmary of a certain college because the head of the English department dealt a very stiff library assignment. Most of the girls do not know that they have deliberately chosen three days in the infirmary in preference to three hours' hard work in the library. How do they get into the infirmary without an ailment? They produce an ailment! The colds or coughs or aches which normally they would have weathered jump into the foreground of consciousness and magnify themselves. For the time being the girls are really sick in bed. If, on top of the library assignment, mail from home has been slow or if the boy friend has forgotten to telephone or if the bookstore bill has climbed higher than it should, then the would-be disease has a better chance. The tie-up is close between low morale and susceptibility to illness.

Unfortunately school infirmaries get onto this escape device and some of them have a rule that a test missed during a period in the infirmary must be made up at the infirmary before the student leaves. Anything which helps a girl see and break up her own escape pattern is a genuine help.



Some capable public speakers whom the world thinks of with pride and envy, and a lot of others not so good, struggle all their lives against the escape device of ill-health. Indeed, some of them habitually have hives or asthma before a major appearance. They tell themselves the attacks must surely be genuine because they want to make the speeches. Actually they are torn between wanting to add to their reputations by making a good speech and dreading possible failure. Or dreading the work or diversion of energy from something essentially more important. Some adult women develop poor eyesight, genuine poor eyesight, because their husbands expect them to read serious non-fiction for which they have no taste. Others tie their grown children to them by the silver cord of illness, staging an attack of something every time the son or daughter approaches marriage or looks favorably at a job away from home.

Procrastination is another neat escape device. We do not actually refuse to do the thing we should do. We just put it off. Off and off and off. Life becomes one long game of compromise with conscience. All our escape gets us is a mental stiff neck from backing into tomorrow with our eyes on yesterday's unfinished business. It also gets us a kind of ankylosis of the will in which this most important appendage of the human spirit is stiffened into uselessness.

Ah, but the real honey of escape devices is the

habit of blaming others for our own failure. A spoiled girl blames her parents. To be sure, parents deserve blame as long as the children are very young. After twelve, however, girls had just as well begin to blame themselves for their shortcomings because other people will. Few people say of a sixteen-year-old, "Why didn't her parents teach her to eat nicely!" They say, "For goodness' sake, what makes her such a boor at table!" Boys seldom remark, "Why didn't her parents teach her to carry her share of the load?" They say, "Don't take the lichen on a house party. She can't stand on her own feet."

Some girls blame their lack of glamor on the fact that a pretty younger sister was the family favorite. So what? One of the best-known stylists in the country was an ugly duckling pushed around by both her parents in favor of a bisque doll of a younger sister. Now the sister is as wilted as the parsley off last night's steak but women travel halfway across the country to have this particular stylist work out their color schemes and hair-dos and basic clothes designs. She got under her own problem at an early age. Blaming parents may ease your own conscience but it never gets you where you want to go.

For a good dramatic case of escaping the show-down by blaming someone else, visit a girls' college along about the middle of January. Two weeks before midyear examinations the food takes an

awful slump. It isn't fit for human consumption. Too many calories, or not enough; no vitamins, insufficient butter, same vegetable day after day, poor meat, starchy desserts. The faculty take a slump also. They can't teach. They never could teach. Maybe they know their subject matter but they haven't the faintest idea how to present it. And that is not all the matter with the school. The president is getting old—or else he's too young. The dean knows nothing about Life. The groundmen are lazy, the walks aren't shoveled soon enough and there's too much sand on the library steps. Ho-ha-hum, these are the words and the key is B-flat minor.

Why this same concert on almost every campus about two weeks before midyears? Because the escape devisers are letting off steam. Much easier to let steam escape than to get up sufficient compression for examinations. Poor dears, half of them do not know they are trying to escape. And after exams are over, they don't even know why the Old School seems to be picking up so satisfactorily.

Parents, adult though they are, are notorious for their skill in escaping by blaming someone else. Sometimes each other, sometimes the children. Let Mother's week go wrong and she's a rare soul if, by Saturday, she does not come down like a ton of bricks on the children. She tells them exactly where to head in and they head. And why the sudden

cleanup on the family? Mother is escaping her own deficiencies by proving to herself that no woman could possibly be a success and drag around such an inefficient family.

But there is also a *crisp* escape device to which the male parent is particularly addicted. The ostrich device. He does not want to deal with disciplinary problems, and so he insists there are none! The need for discipline, he says, is just something the children's mother thought up. Maybe he agrees with their mother that Emmy, who is fifteen, should be in by midnight. But for fear Emmy may not get in and he will be forced to do something about it, he goes to bed and to sleep. Moreover, he doesn't want any trouble stirred up in the morning. Emmy may grow up hampered for life by lack of discipline but Father escapes all effort by affirming there are no problems.

Busyness is an escape device for many of us. We don't do the real thing, the thing we could do best or the thing which spells growth for us, because we are too busy. Yes, we would like to study at school but how can we study when committee meetings, school paper, hockey team, Sophomore Prom, junior Red Cross and the other necessary pursuits take all of our time? Escaping reality by keeping over busy.

Not only girls at school cling to this busyness de-

vice, but grown women wear themselves ragged in clubs rather than face the fact that they cannot cope with their children at home. Or the other way around. Women are quite as likely to sew themselves inside the four walls of their home and insist they are too busy to lend a hand in civic enterprises. Watch out for the treachery of busyness. Gerald Heard talks about "death on a dead level" brought about by the final congestion of action, action, action. If we let busyness consume us, he suggests, then we "early reach our limit of capacity of being after which action takes the place of growth and, next, routine the place of action."

Maybe we should look further into this escape device of action and wonder why we do so few things well. One answer is because we do so many things poorly.

A friend, visiting in the home of Dr. William Sheldon, noted for his basic studies in constitutional psychology and constitutional medicine, was surprised at the number of trophies on the plate rail in the dining room. Trophies for tennis, golf, automobile racing. "For goodness' sake," she said to him, "I didn't know you did so much of this sort of thing."

"I don't," he answered shortly.

"But here is a state championship of year before last."

"I stopped," he said. "If I wanted to be any sort of an A-minus I had to quit being so many kinds of B-plus."

"But while you're at it, why didn't you decide to be an A-plus!" the friend inquired brightly.

Dr. Sheldon answered slowly, "No one can choose to be an A-plus. That sort of quality presupposes tremendous native endowment. Only half a dozen men or women have it in any generation. But quite a few, maybe as many as a hundred right here in America, could become first-class A-minuses if they would quit being so many kinds of B-plus."

The friend went back to her own room shocked and sobered. She was the sort who accepted the chairmanship of a committee and then asked what the committee was. Moreover she did a pretty good job at her jobs. Just a pretty good job! No more. And civilization does not march forward on the confused feet of women who travel in merry circles in order to escape a steep climb uphill.

Worry is another fine escape device. If you can just keep bumping against enough horrible *ifs* then you will be bruised into a vague insensibility which makes it impossible to concentrate on the hour at hand. Having only a limited amount of energy, you can drain it off through the tap of worry or you can harness it to turn a turbine.

The old laws about not crossing bridges until

you get to them, about the great calamities being those which never happen, about not crying over spilled milk—those are sayings born of folk experience. A Chinese proverb says, "A man does not live a hundred years, yet he worries enough for a thousand." Not only the medical profession knows that worry cures no ills and produces a lot of them but generations of common people, cut to our same size and pattern, have arrived at the same conclusion. Of all the escape devices worry is doubtless the most bootless.

Fact is, almost any sort of action or inaction may be an escape device. Even religion. The Communist party once made fine fetish of their slogan "religion—the opiate of the people." When religion keeps the minds of the people on a comfortable heaven after death and never mind present hunger and suffering, then it is indeed a drug and as much an escape device as the opium smoker's dreams. But when religion motivates men and women to the service of others and to the living of a highly disciplined life for themselves, then it is not an escape device. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating."

There is just one kind of escape in which we may encourage ourselves, escape from limitations. That sort of escape is the stuff of growth. When circumstances bind and stifle, then the self makes tremendous effort to move toward a larger life. Oliver

Wendell Holmes had a great idea when he described the chambered nautilus:

Still, as the spiral grew,  
He left the last year's dwelling for the new,  
Stole with soft step its shining archway through,  
Built up its idle door,  
Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the old no  
more

Then the poet's discerning eyes, seeing in the lifelong pattern of the shellfish the struggle of his own spirit, speaks a timeless admonition:

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,  
As the swift seasons roll!  
Leave thy low-vaulted past!  
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,  
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,  
Till thou at length art free,  
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!

This struggle to escape the shell of past experience and go on growing is the most exciting, although sometimes the most bitter, of all struggles. The ironical thing is that we have the intelligence to make it a splendid and stirring enterprise, lasting as long as we last, if we once get the habit of looking frankly at the materials of circumstance and nature endowment and then demanding more of and for ourselves.



Escaping *to* health, instead of away from it, is one of the better devices. When Bessie was five she had infantile paralysis which left her crippled beyond the hope of the most optimistic specialists. They said she could never walk nor use her left hand and arm. But Bessie had a consuming urge to climb trees the way her five brothers climbed. She began by crawling to a bed and trying to climb up the bedpost. She got her brother to hang a rope in an open doorway and she tried to climb the rope. Her determination was almost a mania and nearly broke her mother's heart. As she got a bit older the doctor showed her the X rays of her own body to prove she was wasting her time. And so? And so when she was twelve she climbed the highest tree in her yard and hooted at her brothers! Likewise she climbed high school and university and marriage and children and a splendid creative, exciting life.

It's a great thing to know your own escape devices. For good or ill, if you know them, you can control them. Moreover, once you learn to recognize escape devices in general you will see them in the social pattern of which you are a part. War is a super-super escape device for society. It is the easy way out of civilization's genuine difficulties. An international shooting match, especially when it seems justifiable and the other fellow appears more to blame than we are, is a lot easier than planning ahead and making

sacrifices to avoid war. A hard fact to look at these days But it is always hard to believe that society, in which we put so much trust, is seldom better regulated than our own private lives And that again is one reason why you are your own biggest social problem

Escape devices are funny in a way, especially other people's But you can't laugh them off You have to dig them out like pigweed and you may ruin your nails and knees in the process. Never mind—you'll get a beautiful lithe figure For spirits achieve suppleness and strength and grace and charm the same as bodies do. And they matter even more.

## *You—and Work*

Meanwhile the Cardinal Ippolito, in whom all my best hopes were placed, being dead, I began to understand that the promises of this world are, for the most part, vain phantoms, and that to confide in one's self, and become something of worth and value, is the best and safest course.

MICHELANGELO

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So you THINK you will get a job. Every girl you know, practically, is getting a job. Girls just graduated from high school walk into factories and receive fabulous wages. Girls not even through high school but able to pound a typewriter at half professional speed walk into offices and pick off salaries that would once have made a smart secretary glow with glee. As for girls with a college education behind them, they can ask for the moon and have it served up with trimmings of stars. At least so it seems to you as you moodily munch an orange-ice sundae and

wonder why you should drag through another semester of classes

Is there any valid reason, you ask yourself, why you should be an economic liability to your parents in times like these? You know you can't save the world singlehanded and you have no illusions of grandeur but you would like to be among those present when the roll of women who did their bit is called. Better an ounce of practical help today than pounds of training to use by and by. You've been driven by custom and inertia long enough. Now you intend to take the steering wheel into your own hands. Tomorrow you get a job.

Maybe you're right. Maybe you should get a job. Maybe a long-time job; maybe a short-time job. But before you sign on, it might be salutary—meaning both intelligent and profitable—to take a look at the long run.

You need to decide what you want out of life and what you are willing to put into life in order to get what you want.

Broadly speaking, you probably want the thing your brothers and sweethearts have been fighting for: a free world in which every individual has opportunity to grow and develop along his own line. You are willing to pay for that kind of world, too. You believe in the old tradition that if women cannot carry guns they can at least fill the powder horns.

You want to work for what you believe in. But listen and look. A free world is no overnight accomplishment. You will have to keep on building it throughout your threescore years and ten. Perhaps if at this time you invest a few more years in training then you may double the quality of your output over the next half century. Green timber is all right to drape a tent over for a week-end outing. But only seasoned timber will support the roof for a permanent shelter. The new democratic world has to be an enduring dwelling place and you may be more of an asset if you endure the seasoning process a while longer.

Along with your high hopes for the world, you have a few high hopes for your own personal future. You would like a devoted husband who gives you everything and at the same time you would like to be a success in your own right. Most modern girls have this dual ambition. They look at life through two lenses and both lenses need to be polished and peered through when the first job rears its head. Success in homekeeping, and even in husband-keeping if you want to be frank with yourself, takes broad-base training. You'll have one kind of husband and one kind of children and one kind of wallpaper, books, pictures and friends if you stop with an eighth-grade education. Another kind if you decide high school is your terminus. Still another kind

if you demand college training There are levels of living. You have to decide young which is your level and then keep on climbing as steadily as possible if you expect to reach your destination. To be sure, the goal may advance as you approach it but that's the big fun. For a while you think high school will be enough and then somewhere along the line you decide you simply have to go to college You know college is all you'll ask or expect and then suddenly you want to be a doctor or a painter or a child guidance expert and on you climb again

Sometimes it is necessary to pause at a given plateau to work for a while. You may think you are permanently stymied or anyway forced to mark time. But if you have a reason for working and the job is right you may find you have not been marking time at all. You've been gathering skill for the climb ahead Maybe this really is your time to go to work. If so, whip out the old family spyglass and look for the best job around But don't side-step the advancing column of education for insufficient reason because it is a whole lot harder to get back in step again than the average new marcher realizes

Now that you have definitely decided for one good reason or another to get a job, the primary question is: what job?

Maybe you think the kind of job doesn't matter. Your work will be temporary because you expect to be

married next year or you intend to go back to school one of these days You want to earn money and you don't care what you work at just so you are well paid So you guess you'd just as well dip chocolates as rivet bolts as sew seams as teach school as run a comptometer. Nonsense. Every woman cares what she works at. You can't be happy working at something you can't do well. Maybe you're fitted by nature to acquire the skill to dip chocolates with gusto and not equipped by nature to handle forty wriggling little kindergartners. Or maybe you can handle kindergartners with ease but simply cannot catch on to a filing system. Short time or long, it matters a lot what you do because you are building your *self* as well as your job. You have to live with yourself for quite some time, and the people who love you have to live with you also. And so it matters plenty whether your self is made up of success habits and skill satisfactions or made up of dull reactions and humdrum monotony.

Even our language is full of folk phrases which pack a lot of experience. "round peg in a square hole," "off the beam," "on the wrong foot," "hitting on all eight," "off her base," "hacking briars with a fine-bladed sword." No woman wants to be a misfit, even temporarily, and if she's flattened out to the place she doesn't care then society ought to care because an individual is a social loss when doing a

job poorly or unhappily. Everyone has some sort of pearl which shouldn't be cast to the wrong consumer.

What if you must start from scratch though, humming with energy and good will but not having the slightest idea what you can do well? What if you are all set to sally forth but without the ghost of a notion what to sally after? High school has given you a general interest in life and a certain amount of background knowledge plus some practice in teamwork. Period High school probably has not given you any special skill. And college would probably give you very little more skill. More than likely you have about as much sense of direction as a comet, blazing a path but toward what destination you couldn't say.

Fortunately there are ways of finding out the sort of thing you can do well. Because these ways are comparatively new and somewhat strange, they have not yet become common knowledge. But scientifically devised tests are available, tests so accurate they almost take your breath. After you have taken these tests you can strike out for a job you will enjoy to the last millimeter.

But right away you are likely to say, "My father and mother and all my grandparents hit on their lifework without taking a lot of tests." To be sure they did and some of them found work they loved doing. But not all of them. Unfortunately we have



no statistics on those who have worked all their lives at the wrong job. We do know, however, from sample testings of men and women in some trades and professions that many poor judgments were—and are—made. Many an Aunt Sue is teaching school unhappily today when she might have made a first-rate electrician or insurance agent if only her parents had not expected her to teach. It is still easy to “expect” girls into the wrong jobs especially when they themselves have no definite preferences. A good aptitude and vocational test may save you lifelong frustration.

Some of the questions in the specialized tests may sound farfetched to you but it never pays to laugh at the funny ways of modern science. The tests work. Some of the large department stores can tell you what the management saves in dollars and cents by utilizing aptitude and placement tests. Why make a shoe clerk of a girl who is a natural for jewelry? Or why make any kind of a clerk of a girl who would be an excellent bookkeeper once she had the training? Why make a tearoom hostess of a born buyer—but then few girls would rise to the position of hostess if they were in the wrong job entirely.

Aptitude tests have proven that a high rating on native intelligence, commonly known as intelligence quotient or IQ, has little to do with success in some of the popular jobs for girls. Far more impor-

tant is a factor which might be called personality quotient because salesmanship seems to depend for success more upon the ability to maintain cordial and perpetual contact with people than upon academic aptitude. On the other hand, an attractive outgoing personality might be a total loss on a job in chemical research while a high IQ might be a necessity. Best to know where you stand.

Most statistical tables are good in the large but not much help in individual cases. Insurance tables, for instance, can tell you the average life expectancy of girls born the year you were born but they cannot tell how long *you* will live. Other tables tell you what diseases you are most likely to have, what accidents you are most apt to encounter, what your chances are for wearing glasses, going deaf and having your house hit by lightning. But they cannot say whether any of these things will actually happen to *you*. Aptitude tests, on the contrary, can tell pretty accurately whether *you* will be a flop as a milliner or a wow as a lawyer. They survey *your* path to success.

Let Ethel act as an illustration, she's pretty enough for the kind that come in magazines. Tall and built to model bathing suits. Her high school record was poor although her IQ. was well above normal. She showed ability in drawing but her marks in art courses grew steadily poorer. She was sure she

wanted to go to college but had not the least idea what courses she wanted to take.

Finally her mother said, "No one could do as poor work as you are doing without a reason. Let's get some trained help." Ethel agreed with alacrity. She herself felt that she was missing on half her cylinders. So they hunted the best testing program available.

One of the tests consisted of a list of 135 kinds of work of which she was supposed to check the ones which interested her a great deal, moderately or not at all. But nothing interested her mildly. Either she had great interest or none. Moreover, she had great interest in only two items on the entire list. She would like to be a foreign buyer of women's clothes or a designer of clothes for movie stars. No second choices.

It would look as if Ethel were an easy case for the testing expert to diagnose; her interests were restricted but intense. However, part of the test rating depends upon making sure that the individual understands her own preference. So the psychologist explained in detail the work of a foreign buyer. When Ethel found that foreign buyers began as American buyers and before that were heads of departments and before that ordinary sales girls and before that stockroom girls who merely took dresses back and forth from rack to storeroom—and that the road from stock girl to foreign buyer usually required years of hard work—she lost interest completely in that idea

What did she care about being a success at forty? Life would be over then. Likewise she certainly did not want years of apprenticeship in designing along with routine work in somebody's shop in order to become a designer of clothes for movie stars. It appeared as if Ethel were left with exactly nothing to aim at.

A non-expert, such as Ethel's mother, might have suggested that she go somewhere and major in art, hoping that something of special interest would turn up along the way. But the expert made the illuminating discovery that Ethel would not work at aspects of art which did not interest her. Portraits she would paint and for them she had some ability. Landscapes and still life she would not touch a brush to. Thus with her will set against discipline in the field of her surface talent, she had small chance to succeed there.

Finally when all the tests were in, the expert told Ethel that she would make an excellent student of biology and might become a first-rate librarian with some critical taste in literature. Ethel hooted. Biology was a subject she would never study and a librarian was one thing she would never be. But the next autumn when she entered college she had to have a science and finally took a chance on the expert's advice, contrary to her inclination though it was. At the end of the year biology was her top grade. Later when she needed to augment her allowance she took on some work in the college library. And now, a year

after graduation, she is having a good time at a fair salary in an art library. She is also taking graduate work and is building a good collection of books of her own. Without the help of those aptitude and placement tests taken six years ago the chances are about 99½ out of 100 that she would be teaching school—unhappily.

As important as the vocational results of her tests were the disclosures about her personality. She ranked at the eighth percentile in initiative which meant, her adviser said, that she could not have had less initiative and come in out of the rain. Why? Probably because family misfortune had caused her to be pushed around a lot as a child, settled only to be uprooted, constantly changing schools, friends and loyalties. Deep beneath her conscious mind she had learned to protect herself from disappointment by not setting her heart on anything or anyone too much. Once the results of her tests were explained to her and her pattern pointed out, she was able to take herself in hand. Rebuilding is sometimes a slow process but the results are lifelong.

The jobs now open to women include practically everything but deep-sea diving and there are no doubt a few lady pioneers exploring the floor of the ocean. Right now there are around 180,000 women and girls in the armed forces—Wacs, Waves, Spars, Wasps and the like, along with some 51,000 nurses.

Two million plus are in war industries exclusive of food and clothing. One million plus are in civil service. About three quarters of a million are teachers, two and one half million in agriculture, one and one half million in textiles, apparel, uniforms, tents, leather and other secondary war industries. Nearly three million in vitally important food industries. Total: well over eight million.

Then there are another ten million women in trade, personal services, transportation and industries producing civilian necessities, nurses, doctors, laboratory technicians, Red Cross workers, social workers, lawyers, research chemists, clerks, stenographers, automobile drivers and mechanics, welders, carpenters, plumbers, and scores of other jobs their grandmothers never dreamed of and probably couldn't spell. Girls are doing spot welding and spray painting, running drill presses, loading shells, inspecting war equipment, tracing patterns for battleships, operating all sorts of machinery. These days with mighty few exceptions wherever there is work there are women. You name it and then if you want it go get it.

Even if your job is temporary, give yourself the advantage of vocational testing when possible. However, sometimes a situation occurs in which the only job available is one you do not care for. What then? Why then, if you need a job and that particular job

seems earmarked for you, ignore your preferences for a while and heave to. It's a big thing to make yourself like an uncongenial job because you are doing it for someone who matters or because you are contributing to a cause. These days not a few brides who would ordinarily be parading their trousseaus and garnishing their new homes are instead slaving over tough jobs and liking them. Not because the jobs suit their taste or even their skill and training but because they are helping to win a lasting peace and at the same time saving shekels for future joy. With the same spirit high school girls, and even younger fry than they, are carrying side-line jobs including double-time housework and not minding the drain on their playtime because they are working for something worth working for.

## *Work and Marriage*

'Tis one thing to know,  
And another to practice  
ROBERT BROWNING, *Christmas Eve*

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ALTHOUGH all of us know scads of happy unmarried women and have met more than a handful of unhappily married women, few teen-age girls expect to be either. Happily married is just one of those things which most girls look forward to like expecting sunshine in June and frosting on a birthday cake. Whatever "normal" means for a girl it includes the prospect of successful marriage.

But when it comes to specific expectations of marriage, girls differ widely and their differences fall into three general camps. One group expects to be supported. These girls are more than willing to let the



man of the house manage the financial angle all of their years. They have no passion for jobs or careers of their own. The second group also wants a home but these girls definitely do not want to be tied to it. They want to do something on their own either because they have a talent to develop or crave financial independence. Maybe both. Also they have a hunch that running a house and rearing a family will not absorb all their energy in these days when so many household responsibilities and so much of a child's education are taken out of the home. The third group is smaller in number. They are the girls who frankly do not care to take on marriage. Their verve to achieve demands a wide arc with no family impedimenta.

You will eventually belong to one group or another. Therefore it is good mental exercise to turn a cold appraising eye upon all three groups before you decide in which camp to stake down your claim. But do you have to make up your mind already when you don't expect to give marriage a serious thought for another six years? To answer one question with another, in good Socratic manner, did you ever notice that most decisions are made before you get to the point of thinking seriously about them? A decision depends upon the kind of person you are and by the time you want to make a choice you may already have limited your decision by your own limitations.

For example, Mollie, aged seventeen, graduated from high school one night and the next noon was married to Jim, aged nineteen. Her mother thought seventeen was too young but Mollie thought life was too short—if you know what they meant and you do. Then for three years Mollie kept house joyfully with a lot of time left over to play bridge with her girl friends. One day when she and Jim had a chance to buy a sweet little house with modern everything, she suddenly realized that they had no money in the bank and that Jim was not getting ahead very fast. Obviously, she knew they had no money in the bank before that house came along but she never before realized what life without savings meant. Right that moment she decided to get a job. She was tired of doing nothing but housework anyway, she said, and she half envied the girls who stepped out neatly tailor-made at 8 00 A. M. and clipped off to their offices. Mollie would have said that at that moment she was choosing to get a job.

But actually she did not have much choice. At that time there was no war boom and in her community there were no unskilled jobs she wanted. She wished with all her heart that she had taken typing in school or had gone on after she married and taken a secretarial course. Half a dozen firms wanted good secretarial help but at this point in her life she did not want to be delayed a year while she learned short-

hand. And so actually she could not make a free choice: she was bound by her limitations. In a few weeks she took a job in which she definitely had no interest.

Now maybe your Jim will always have money in the bank to buy little houses and such. But the statistical chances are against it. If you lop off the millionaires at the top, the average income in this country is so low one hates to write it down. If there is even a chance that you may ever want to lend a hand in family support, the time to prepare yourself is now. You might as well look a fact in the face.

Take this group who expect to be supported all their lives. Well, they won't be. In March 1940, which was about the last date of approximately normal conditions, the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor reported that 13.8 per cent of the married women between 18 and 64 years of age were in the labor force. At present one out of every six married women between the ages of 20 and 55 years is working. One out of every two widows or divorced women is supporting herself. Some economists believe that we are moving toward a permanent two-parent support of the family.

But suppose you realized that trend long ago. And besides, your father is the kind who believes that every girl ought to be able to support herself whether she ever needs to or not. He thinks that knowing a trade

is better insurance than a fat endowment policy. When you started high school he insisted that you look around and decide on something you wanted to learn to do well Hairdressing or home ec or certified public accounting—he didn't care what. The thing you finally hit on was court stenography. You seem to have a positive gift for rapid shorthand and you intend to make it pay. A home, yes, but dependent, no. You will marry for love and not for financial security because you can always pay your way if you want to. You belong by nature in that second group, the gals who intend to prepare themselves to have their cake and eat it too. Well, you might as well know before you start that all your cake may not be frosted.

Consider Harriet. When Harriet married Bob she had a laboratory assistantship in a near-by hospital. The hours were good and so was the pay. Better, she loved her job. It had a future. She learned right alongside her boss. The more he knew the more she knew and her devotion to the little bewhiskered man was the same as any other young scientist's devotion to his chief. Bob was proud of her work, too. Although he did not understand the technicalities of her laboratory any more than she understood his problems in architecture, they talked things over with mutual profit.

Once in a while Bob would say, "Listen, darling,

when do we buy a crib?" And Harriet would answer, "Oh, I want children all right, Papa, but not yet." Eventually, however, tomorrow has to become today and Harriet agreed that if they were ever going to have a family they had better move into a three-bedroom apartment and get ready. And then what happened to their careers?

Bob's went right on, naturally, and Harriet's came to an abrupt pause—naturally. She said she would leave the lab temporarily. In her case temporarily became eight years. There were three babies and a few other complications. Then when the oldest child was in school, the second in kindergarten and the two-year-old being looked after by a dependable housekeeper, Harriet went back to the lab. Mornings she was with the children until they were off for school; afternoons she was home soon after they were. The children fell on her with swoops of joy and home seemed to run more smoothly than when she carried all the household responsibilities. Once more she loved her lab as well as the children—but differently as every woman knows—and after a time she caught up to the place she had been eight years previously. She went on from there. Not so fast, however, and probably never as far as if she had not had a family.

But that's the way it is. Unless they are geniuses most girls who want both a home and a career will have to accept a degree of limitation in the latter

direction if not in both directions. Maybe a portrait painter or an author or a seamstress can work at home right through the years when children are small. But not easily. Usually the most a mother can hope for is to keep her hand in and not lose ground.

However—and this is a point to ponder at fourteen rather than forty—when the children are grown, then the mother who has a profession she enjoys and is trained for can go on being something during all the years ahead. Look around you at the women who are adrift when their children go off to college. Then keep one of your own eyes open for something you will enjoy doing the last half of your life. Incidentally, if you are career-and-marriage-minded, you might wangle into your school curriculum some of those courses in cooking and budgeting and child psychology and physiology and interior decorating and any other likely number which will conserve time and energy in those busiest ten years ahead.

Remember the third group—those who want a career without marriage or who get a career without marriage whether they wanted it that way or not? In August 1943 a *Fortune* survey disclosed the merry fact that 21 per cent of the single women between 25 and 35 years of age preferred a career to marriage. But remaining single is no guarantee that you will have only yourself to support. A recent study of 12,000 business and professional women, married and single,

showed that 48 per cent had someone beside themselves dependent upon them. Across the country 66 3 per cent of all single women work.

It begins to look as if the modern princess peering into her magic mirror to see what knight comes riding had better have a stout little nag of her own waiting so that the two of you can jog along together. The pillioned saddle is out And it's nothing to cry over, either, because actually you have more fun in your own stirrups holding a bridle in your own hands But riding on a bridle path wide enough for two when you want it that way.

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## *Date Pits*

To know men is different from knowing things. It is profound philosophy to sound the depths of feeling and distinguish traits of character. Men must be studied as deeply as books.

BALTAZAR GRAECIAN, *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*

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SPEAKING OF MEN—and we still are, aren't we? Even Madame Curie who was certainly single-minded about her pitchblende, even she took time out to marry her professor and bring up the little Curies. That, as we have just been noting, is the serious side of dating: marriage, home and children.

But house-hunting is rather leaping to conclusions for a gail who is merely date-hunting, in an offhand manner, and who scarcely knows what to do with a date when he rings the doorbell. Sometimes just getting a date seems enough of a challenge without having to keep him interested for hours on end. But



when statistics are shouting seven to one, meaning maidens to men, you can't take chances. For that matter you never can take chances on a lad's going home bored. It hurts your pride, as well as your reputation. Any woman wants to be able to refuse a milk shake or an opera because she's the bored one—if anyone has to be bored. She doesn't want to be walked out on because she's the blank.

It is hard to name a worse trial than being asked to a dance you want to go to by the chap you want to go with when you haven't the slightest idea what to do with him once you are Alone Together. A woman suffers. But the man may suffer, too—before, during and after the date. If this is his first formal dance he is probably as uncertain as you are. Maybe he's never had a real date before, just knocked around with the dames at school and drugstore. Gang dates. But this is the Junior Prom. He has to take some hag along, he tells himself, and so he chooses you.

Now, it may be, of course, that for months he's been wanting to ask you to go to a movie. It may be that he really thinks you're a cute trick. But maybe again, so far as the dance is concerned, he had asked half a dozen girls before he got to you. You can't be sure. These are your maybes but his maybes may be worse.

Maybe he's thinking that maybe you only promised to go with him because you're sorry for such a

freckle-face. Or maybe he thinks you think he's a good dancer when he knows he's all elbows in a crowd. Also he's wondering whether he should borrow a razor and shave, thus running a chance of some wise guy's making a crack about his clean face, or whether he should wear the youthful down which makes him look like a hazel burr. Or maybe he's struggling with his first tux and feels like a donkey in harness. Maybe his good shoes pinch, his belt is too tight, he can't get his hair to lie flat, and his hands hang out of his sleeves like a couple of hams. Maybe he hasn't the slightest idea what to talk to a girl about—alone, that is, without the cross fire of a crowd. Maybe he's afraid you'll want to neck.

Up in your own room getting ready, you know you never looked so hideous in your life. And at that, you don't look any worse than you feel—a new girdle constricting your middle and high heels threatening to land you on your nose. Why you didn't practice with those heels you cannot now understand. You do your hair up and instead of looking older you only look as if you were trying to look older. You let your hair hang and that's just what it does—hangs. You look at your hands and praise Allah that you've quit biting your nails—or have you? Can you count on yourself in a jam? And are fingernails worth the torture? Once you get to the dance, you know all the short boys will cut in and you'll look just like

Alice in Wonderland dancing with the hare. But all your other worries fade before the question Shall you wear your glasses or leave them home? Either look like the great horned owl or bump around blind as a bat Who ever saw a man make love to a woman in glasses? And what will you do anyway when he wants to kiss you good night? You wish you could get a strep throat

Well? Well, every girl's gone through this same agony with special and particular refinements of her own depending upon whether she was too fat or too lean, too tall or too short, too shy, too eager, too critical, too—but do you know what it all boils down to? A girl suffers in proportion to her self-centeredness If there's any human way to forget herself, to quit caring how she impresses people and to bend her energies toward making her date and everybody else have a gorgeous time, she will be a success This sentiment is not something out of Aunt Lizzie's auto-graph album It's as up to date as tomorrow's broadcast and as sure as Christmas If you don't believe it, look around you

There's Marie who is plain and plump and always has a line of boys on her front porch. Why? She makes them feel at home She makes the girls feel at home, too They all come together. No one would think of leaving her off a party list because wherever she is a good time is had by all Or there's Lois who

is thin and awkward with a mouth a block wide but she has a way of getting people to do things—crazy things, maybe, but fun. Look all around you at women of all ages. Popularity doesn't seem to depend upon shape or size or clothes or style or mental ability or noble endeavor. It depends upon the knack of getting other people interested in something. Take it or leave it, but it's a fact of life as natural as a chick's breaking out of its shell. Fact and knack, moreover, it can be learned.

Anyhow this is the night of the dance and you are finally dressed. The doorbell rings. Who shall answer? You want to put your best parent forward, and you hope your mother won't mention that this is your first formal party. Also that Dad won't tell you again what time to be in, you've already discussed that little matter four times. If he does, you'll just wait till you get outside and then laugh airily and say they're really sweet, your parents. Old-fashioned, of course, but okay.

If your date brings a corsage, you can pin it on before you leave home providing the weather isn't too cold. It's quite all right, however, to take it with you in its box so that it will be fresh when you arrive. Perhaps he had asked the color of the dress you were wearing so that he might choose just the right thing. Or perhaps he took a chance and arrives with an orchid for your red gown. Well, an orchid's always an

orchid and you just about have to wear his gift even if it is a sunflower. What if you feel quite certain he won't bring a corsage and that all the other girls will have them? Should you get yourself some flowers and have them on when he arrives? No, ma'am. If your dress positively shouts for flowers, get the delicate artificial ones which will appear to be a part of the dress in case he has no corsage or can be happily removed if he comes laden.

To walk or to ride· that's always a poser. If the dance is near by you can walk, even in a formal and even in cold weather. Common sense is never poor taste. Plop your fancy slippers into a slipper bag and frankly wear something comfortable for walking. But not your saddle shoes! If the dance is halfway across the city and you must go by streetcar or elevated, don't let that worry you. These are days to adapt to circumstance. However, if you are on the planning committee for the dance you might take the matter of transportation into consideration and suggest short formals. Or an informal dance.

If your escort has a car or comes in a taxi, remember to let him open and close the doors. Of course he knows that you bang in and out of cars all day without assistance and probably drive as well as he does, but this is your time to be looked after. It's the little things like opening doors for yourself and asking directions, when directions are necessary, and waiting

for the boy to say it's time to go home which mark a girl as inexperienced

If the dance is at a boarding school, you may have a reception line. In that event, the first person in the line, who may be the president of the class giving the dance, will take your names and present you to the next in line who may be the faculty sponsor or perhaps the president of the school. In any case, your name will be passed from one member of the line to the next and all you need do is to bow or shake hands and move on. Don't, for goodness' sake, make this a time for getting chatty with some special friend. A good reception line moves quickly.

If the dance is a big high school dance you will probably have official chaperones, teachers or parents who have taken on the duties of hosts and hostesses. If no one is at the door to greet you, make sure that you hunt out your chaperones early in the evening. Present your escort to them. Ease in making introductions is another mark of the experienced socialite. The rule is simple: present a man to a woman and a younger person to an older person. "Mrs. Hornick, may I present Larry Peterson?" Or, "Mrs. Hornick, may I present Mr. Peterson?" "Mr. Hornick, Mr. Peterson" is sufficient formula for the two men—Mr. Hornick's name coming first when he is the older. In introducing your escort to a classmate you might say, "Mary, this is Larry Peterson," and then to Larry you

might add, "Mary Deevers is one of my classmates." If your girl friends are old enough to go around socially they are old enough to have all men, young or old, presented to them. Perhaps your friend Grace Hunter is only fifteen and your Uncle Tim is sixty-something. Nevertheless you say, "Grace, may I present my Uncle Tim Benton? Uncle Tim, Grace Hunter is one of my close friends." Or, "Grace, this is my Uncle Tim Benton. And Uncle Tim, this is Grace Hunter whom you had better remember because you'll see a lot of her." When introducing two boys it makes no difference which name comes first although if one is a stranger it is probably neater to introduce your old friends to him.

Introductions mean so much in the total impression of poise and ease that it never hurts to spend a little time in private practicing them. If you have not lived where guests and strangers are everyday assets so that you've had your hand in on introductions since you could first talk, then you might gather up some friends and make yourselves charm perfect. Practice will save you the trouble of going around the block to keep from having to introduce someone.

No matter how impersonal your hostesses may seem to you, find them before you leave the dance and thank them for a happy evening. The girl who merely ducks out with her date and hopes none of the hostesses will remember who said good night is just

jeopardizing her own stock and reflecting discredit on her parents. Incidentally, a boy's opinion of a girl goes up notches, no matter how much he may sputter, when she shows consideration for the adults at the party.

Food is a part of most parties. At large dances perhaps only punch is served. Or maybe a light buffet, or what is often termed "refreshments." At private dances there is likely to be more food and more meticulous service. It is to hope that you have had something to eat in the past three days and do not make the party an occasion to capture all you can without actually slugging a waiter. Funny thing the way nice girls, when young, will fall on a tray of open-faced sandwiches as if they were stocking up for a transatlantic voyage. Some smart hostesses, knowing their girls and boys, make no attempt at dainty refreshment but turn the rumpus room into a hamburger joint and serve Food.

Few are the dances where someone doesn't say to someone, "I got a car out here." And someone goes. Which is one of these pro-and-con considerations to have special attention in a later chapter.

Few also are the dances, at least the first dances, where the girl doesn't moan to herself, "If I only knew something to say!" Everything she can think of sounds silly or flat or is open to two interpreta-



tions. Which is another of those considerations to be further considered

By'mby all dances end So what? Nobody goes home, of course That's a terrifically old-fashioned thing to do. The night being far spent and sleep being important and parents being on the alert at home, the boys and girls go Someplace Else. Now this is a folkway, a custom, a gotta. And there is small use in holding a folkway up against the light of reason So here you are with everybody going on. Still, this is a social world made up of other people who have rights as well as liberties. And so before you go on, consider

Are you going someplace where you are wanted? If it's a hot-dog parlor—sic!—why, yes, you are wanted, no doubt, by the proprietor. You can have a wonderful time, too, spreading mustard around. The plainer the place, the more your expensive clothes look out of place and so, somehow, the more fun. Many a flat dance has been redeemed by a cheeseburger later Many a stuffy date has proved better than all right when he got away from the formal atmosphere Many an awkward lad who trips on a polished dance floor can really shake a leg when he gets back to his favorite little hangout. After the ball is over, the excitement begins.

However, if it is someone's home to which you are

going for the post-mortem jubilee, be sure you are expected. Or at least welcome. Few parents, except lecturers on adolescence, really want the young to breeze in at 2.30 A.M. all hep to scramble eggs. When Mary-be-merry assures you that her father and mother never care WHO she brings home any time of day or night, better be certain that she really has brought people in before. Her Dad's work has to go on tomorrow and he may have a business deal or a brain operation, or a case to plead more important than the lot of you. Some adults actually do have responsibilities. To them sleep may matter.

Eventually, all things being equal, you arrive at your own home from whence you started. Unless the hour is still reasonable, whatever that means at your house, or you see someone still astir, meaning normally astir and not pacing the floor, or you catch a whiff of the hot chocolate which is always waiting for your return, then maybe it would be good form—good for your form—to tell your escort good night and let yourself in quietly. How you tell him good night is part of that forthcoming pro-and-con discourse but some sort of “thanks for the evening” is part of your sign-off.

The same rules for success hold for movies as for dances or any other evening's amusement—theater, skating rink, loop-the-loop park or whatever. A couple sure-fire *dos* and a couple foolproof *don'ts* are

as much a part of your permanent equipment as your own bones.

DON'T insist on playing your way all the time. Girls in their teens can be just as much spoiled infants as children who insist on playing hopscotch when everyone else chooses last-couple-out. If you prefer movies and your date prefers basketball, you could sometimes make it basketball. And don't say you're bored. Get unbored. Get into the game and you may have a new thrill. If he wants to go to the college grill to dance but you feel conspic dragging him in there on a Saturday night—well, go anyway. He learned to play bridge for you. Come out of the fog and let him steer the ship sometimes.

DON'T overspend. Especially his money. Strewing yours about is bad enough—buying yourself a fancy compact while you wait for him to make a phone call in the drugstore, picking up a cute and expensive pair of play shoes which you happen to see in a window—you know how some dames can't keep their pocketbooks latched. If you happen to come of a family which has more money than his has, ignore the difference whenever you can.

But if blatant spending of your own shekels makes a gruesome twosome, it's even less sporting to run up his bills. When he asks you to name the fun and the place, be certain he can afford your choice. There's no percentage in picking a swanky spot which leaves

his billfold limp Even if you never expect to see him again, life has its own ironical karma The chap you swindle out of a fifty-dollar evening may be the very man who passes you up years later when you could do with a little rapt attention. Not that you go' around figuring dividends on your own thoughtfulness, but putting yourself in the other fellow's place pans out in the end.

DON'T telephone. To him. To any him Any time. Maybe this is overstatement for emphasis, as they say in English III, but it is understatement for success. Sounds like the coy stuff of early 1900? It's older than that; pre-Garden of Eden. Men have always liked the illusion of doing the running after and this is one of the more harmless ways of encouraging their fantasy. But you say you're the straightforward type and you'd just as soon call a man as a girl when you have something important to say. Then capitalize IMPORTANT. If it's genuine news—say your father bites the dog—then maybe you should call the boy friend and let him know before he reads it in the papers. But short of catastrophe or catalepsy, keep off the phone Men are allergic to telephone bells anyhow and a feminine voice is likely to make them break into hives even when it's the voice they love to hear. And while you're muffling, you might limit the calls per girl friend to two per day. Girls have families who are also people.

First among the *dos* is: accept your hard blows as part of life. None of this, "A blow's been dealt me but I'll be brave." You hafta have the kind of chin from which blows glance off. Go on from where you are. Pick up the conversation or the life just where you left off before the blow.

Now some blows are real wallops. The plans which matter most to you may suddenly go awry. Then your stamina has to be reinforced with solid steel convictions which can carry the strain. But most blows merely disarrange an evening. They're the equivalent of having your picnic rained on. The philosophy of sportsmanship is to put your mind on something else—fast—whenever catastrophe overtakes you. Salt in your coffee, grease on your new slacks, flat tire while rushing to a train—so what? Tomorrow the sparrows will still twitter and the stores will open at their usual hour. If no one meant to ruin your life just gulp down your disappointment and whistle three bars of Beethoven's Fifth.

Men seem to have a sixth sense for picking wives, if they can, who are good sports. And sportsmanship can be cultivated. Women are even more appreciative; good sportsmanship makes their loyalty to the gal who has it mount up on wings like eagles.

The second *do* is first cousin to sportsmanship. Do carry your share. Like high heels, this is a trait you cannot count on in public unless you have practiced

at home. A girl who washes the dishes but leaves the pans for Mom is probably the same girl who plays ball until the picnic lunch is unpacked and then hunts four-leaf clovers while someone else clears the remains "For goodness' sake," she says, "is everything done already!" Yes, dearie, the work's done and you will be too if you don't learn cricket.

Your share of a deal may be financial. Someone has to pay for the cokes. How about having a turn? "The best junior high in Toledo" will oust from its "group" the boys and girls who only ride and never pull. Things which are prorated are even more important. When the bunch is buying a present, sponsoring a dance, paying for a feed—be sure you pay your fraction. And promptly. Why should someone else go without lunch because you choose to treat yourself to a new sweater? Carry your share if it breaks you.

*Contributing* your share is a still higher form of life—and a third *do*. To contribute means to give out. Jive or party for the orphans, it's the same old theory of putting yourself into a thing. Sleigh ride breaks down, for instance, and the whole mess of you have to sit for hours in some farmer's kitchen until rescue arrives. Sure as taxes, some girls gripe, some are good sports but some contribute. The contributors think up the games, start the songs, make the wise-cracks, turn a possible washout into a memorable occasion.

When you gaze down the spiral staircase of your past, have you been a contributor or just a dipper-inner? That staircase goes right on up the way it's been going; your future recapitulates your past. Unless, that is, you change the blueprint yourself. All through life, some people sing the Hallelujah chorus and others merely stand up.

What has all this to do with the fine art of dating? These considerations appear to be more or less general, good for both sexes at all ages. But that's the funny thing about successful dating. It boils down to the premise that successful people have success with their dates. The trick is to be a going concern yourself and to keep your eye on the other fellow's welfare. It's got to be a habit, a kind of hidden vitamin content. If you want to rate with a date, you have to look at life through his eyes, including his spectacles if he wears them. At fifteen, fifty and ninety-nine, it's all the same technique. Cleopatra had to do it, so did Ninon de Lenclos and Lily Langtry. Likewise the Duchess of Windsor, Lynn Fontanne and the girl you think of when you think of tomorrow's *you*.

## Talk About Talk

*Nihil dictum quod non dictum prius*

TERENCE, Second Century B C



"THERE IS NOTHING said which has not been said before"—that's exactly the way you feel when the light of your life suddenly gives you his undivided attention and you can't think of one little remark worth remarking. Every woman has been caught on this particular hot spot—alone with the right man and nothing to say. It doesn't matter whether you are fourteen, leaning against a lamppost waiting for him to give back your algebra book so you can dash for home and end your misery, or twenty-eight, leaning against the railing of a transatlantic steamer waiting for him to hand back your camera so you can hide



behind a lifeboat and bite out your stupid tongue. Any age in any place a quick tongue can make you and a stupid tongue can break you. Which does not mean there is no place for silence nor that the chatterbox wins.

In this day of blind dates, who sometimes prove deaf and dumb as well, conversation matters. It matters anyhow, even when you're out with your next-door neighbor's son whom you've known all your life. It matters when you first meet a person, boy or girl, man or woman. It matters when you're in a crowd and when you're alone. Not alone by yourself; the other kind of alone. Lack of it can practically leave you sitting on the ash heap waiting for the collector of rags and bones.

To be a good conversationalist one needs both knowledge and tenacity. Book knowledge isn't the main kind although your mind does have to get around these days and know what's going on. Yes, and you have to have a few hunches about the meaning of what's going on. But even when you're primed with cogent observations you still have to find an opening into the other person's interest. That's where tenacity comes in.

Take Susie's cousin Clyde for a tough example. Now Susie herself is as friendly as a robin on the lawn. She twitters happily in all weathers and anyone would like to be left perching on a limb with Susie.

But Clyde must take after the other side of the house. One morning Susie comes to school in large excitement announcing that Clyde, whom she hasn't seen since Gram's and Gramp's golden wedding anniversary, is now a lieutenant j g. stationed near by and spending a short leave at her house. He's grown up tall and thin and so homely he's distinguished-looking; besides he has a faint scar across one cheek which looks like a saber thrust. You sigh; you've always adored saber thrusts. His hair is dark and wavy, she says, and his eyes a smoky blue. Only drawback is he doesn't talk much, but he's brilliant; everyone says he's terribly brilliant. Susie's mother and dad are having a lot of their friends in for tea on Sunday afternoon to meet Clyde. Young and old will be there together the way they do these days. He's bringing some fellow officers and you are asked to help serve.

Well, you'd rather help serve than to go down a receiving line however short. You'd rather walk up to a stranger and say, "Won't you come have some tea?" than be pinned to the wall by an old friend like Dr. Thorndike who always has a theory to expound. You hope you'll get to talk with Susie's Clyde—the kind of talk he'll remember and have a yen to continue. Off you go to buy gloves for your green outfit before you recollect you won't be wearing gloves. Anyhow, eventually comes Sunday.

Cornes also the tea, the guests, the cheerful chatter, the lieutenant j g.s and about four girls per each. But believe it or not, and you don't, late in the afternoon one of the j g.s takes Clyde by the arm and walks over to you and Susie. "You girls have been teasing everyone else," he says. "How about having a platter of sandwiches with us?" Next thing you know you are comfortably seated in the breakfast room—it was Susie's idea—when she is called away and the other j.g goes with her. So what have you on your hands? Nothing but the man of the hour.

Who is shy.

Or is he stupid? Honestly, you begin to wonder. You ask about the naval yard where he is stationed and he answers in monosyllables. Does he think you're a spy? Besides, what harm could it do to tell a spy whether the food is good and what they eat on? You try another tack. Did he like Ben Bernie's band which played out there last night? . . . He liked the band. But evidently music is not his passion. Maybe he prefers movies. You name several recent ones. . . . Yes, he has seen them or no, he hasn't—right down the list as if he were checking a questionnaire. Not a comment. So you start to tell the story of one he hasn't seen when suddenly you realize that the high point of your tale is death before a firing squad for a young naval officer. You gulp the climax but he munches on; apparently firing squads are nothing to

him Now you try baseball. If the radio were on, you remark brightly, the scores would just about be coming in. . . But the radio wouldn't be on at a tea, he finally responds. Teas! Perhaps in his quiet way he really likes teas. . . . But a simple shake of his head disposes of teas, dances and dinner parties.

Stupid you! The quiet type always read books—you will draw him out along literary lines. You know the titles because your mother takes Book-of-the-Month and so you lead off with the one you happen really to have read. . . . He never heard of it—no time to read these days. Ah! Maybe he has a hobby. Hobbies are easy to bring up because the sandwiches are on an old silver platter and collecting old silver is a hobby of Susie's mother. . . . He does not collect Butterflies leave him cold and so do stamps, coins and wood carvings. Small use telling him about your shelf of cats but you tell. And cats lead you to Kipling who takes you, logically, to India, the Burma Road, the Taj Mahal, sapphires, lepers, cotton factories, Gandhi, prison food and back home to the open-faced sandwiches. Probably your longest monologue interspersed by small hopeful silences which yield nothing. Finally, at long last and in conclusion, caring for no more food nor even for the further privilege of cornering a brilliant j.g., you contemplate pouring the rest of the tea down his neck and walking haughtily from the room. Then your foot kicks

something hard and round which rolls across the floor. One of Susie's little brother's marbles, you remark automatically. Marbles! That is the word Marbles he knows. Marbles he can talk about. And not in terms of his childhood either. Last week he beat the commanding officer at marbles. Most C.O.s wouldn't take a hand at marbles but it happened this way. The tournament unrolls before you, technicalities and all.

Half an hour later when Susie's mother drifts into the breakfast room, having given up locating the guest of honor in time for good-byes, her brilliant nephew Clyde is down on the floor taking imaginary shots. His face is beaming; his smoky blue eyes shining. He never had such a good time in his life. That's his story. You are the most interesting girl he ever met and he doesn't care who knows that either.

It would be highly satisfactory to add that your scintillating and tenacious conversation bore splendid fruit and that he called you on the phone every day the next week, spent all his leaves at Susie's so he could see you again and again until that last day, before he shipped out, when he slipped the diamond on your finger and went off with your picture in his watch. Actually, of course, you are likely never to see him again and so what?

And so you learned a thing which made Madame de Stael famous across two continents. there is a

possible conversational opening into the citadel of every man's interest. And every woman's. When you find the thing which genuinely interests another individual, then he or she is open to friendship. The kind which lasts.

But maybe you don't have even so much backing as a plate of sandwiches. You are starting out the door with a stranger just because your roommate, Marjory, wants to do a good turn for her Johnnie's new pal. You know his name is Bill; you know he's so short you wish you'd worn your low-heeled shoes, you know he went to an engineering school before he was drafted. He looks well fed and soap-clean and has a signet ring on one finger. Of course you could begin with the ring, you tell yourself, and inquire brightly, "Who gave it to you? A girl?"—and that would probably end your conversational difficulties. Actually he might be more interested if you did begin with the ring but you won't because practically all young people are conventional. In spite of your best resolves you are likely to begin with the weather. Weather's so handy to clutch at. "Swell night," you say "After this cold spring we can do with a couple good days." Then you could bat your head against a tree. He knows about the weather. In fact he says he has noticed the weather. Well, let him make a remark then. But he doesn't. Probably he didn't want to come. Probably Johnnie made him come to please

Marjory who probably told him you didn't have many dates although you were a lot of fun with girls. You wish to goodness you had stayed with girls. You bet he thinks you're too tall for him. You don't know why you wore a purple dress. You'd feel a lot better in brown. You're used to brown. But you can't say, "Listen, let's go back while I get something brown. My best purse is brown; my eyes are brown." Brown, brown. Maybe you're going crazy. Maybe he thinks you are crazy

All this in the first two minutes. See why? You're thinking about yourself! About the impression you're making. About what he thinks of you. Listen, Toots, reverse your gears. Get yourself out of the way quickly. Sometimes it helps to take the ram by the horns, as your Grandpappy used to say, and let him know the worst first. "Blind dates are a hazard," you tell him with a good wide grin. "If you'd like to know my pedigree, why I'm eighteen and my father owns a hardware store. He likes to do carpentry at home and he has a workshop in the basement. My mother keeps house and is president of the P.T.A. She still sings, too, although she's nearly forty. I have a brother Raymond who's in England and two younger sisters, Ellen and Louise. My favorite books are biography and detective stories. I love tennis, hate golf and intend to let all my children chew gum"

You couldn't throw it to him like that? One of the most popular girls in a popular college gives all her blind dates the family history inside the first two minutes. Hers is nothing distinguished, either. But she gets a laugh and at least sixteen points of contact. Conversation rolls along. He almost has to come through with a thumbnail sketch of himself and something of common interest is bound to roll out.

One important part of conversation, maybe the most important, is listening. The Chinese have a proverb, "A good talker is not equal to a good listener." When you can get the other person to telling you, then you can settle back and know he or she is having a swell time. You may have to prime the pump now and then—remember how they used to pour a bucketful of water down the thing before it would get up enough suction to begin to produce? Same with a date. Give him just enough talk to set him off and then don't interrupt with tales about yourself. That takes an iron self-control, sometimes, especially when you've been in a worse accident than his or climbed a higher mountain or won a bigger tournament. Plainly, you have to use judgment about when to let him know you also get around, but the chances are still ten out of ten that the more he talks the better time he's having. And this is specially true of the lad who does not usually talk much. If you are his magic key and can open up his mind as few people can,



then he is not likely to forget you in a hurry. Some women have a way of bringing out a man which almost amounts to creating his personality. Men react to them as to a catalytic agent.

But naturally you can't be a good listener until you get the other person talking; that's the pose! with a practical stranger. In some colleges and prep schools, where blind dates come in by the busload from neighboring schools or army posts, the girls write a short sketch of themselves which goes with the invitation. More than one lad has later acknowledged that he boned up on poetry because his prospective girl friend admitted her fondness for Eliot or bought a new tie because her favorite color was blue.

Fortunately most twosomes are not composed entirely of abstract conversation. Going to and from in a car you may be caught in a mesh of silence. But usually there is something to do. "Thought is the child of action," Disraeli used to say. "We cannot learn men from books." And if no one has planned something special to do—if, for example, you are meeting at Marjory's house—then you can suggest something. Bridge, monopoly, dominoes or any old kid games are good going if you attack them with fervor. Ping-pong is a natural. No matter how decrepit your basement, if you can clean it thoroughly, install a ping-pong table, a good light, and a couple benches you have your good time guaranteed. Shuf-

fleboard is another winner if your basement affords space to chalk it out.

No one has to be reminded of the radio, nor of dancing to phonograph records, nor of the greatest of all indoor sports—eating. But some girls forget that boys like to cook. Or at least they like to show how awkward they are near a stove, how they can't cook or even dry a dish. It amounts to the same thing; they like to be in the kitchen. Breathes there a male with soul so dead he doesn't enjoy seeing his woman wear a kitchen apron? Generations have made fudge and popped corn and the magic still brings the rabbits right out of the hat. When the games have been strenuous or the hour is late, scrambled eggs may be more to taste but do let the boy in on the scramble. None of this you-wait-in-the-parlor-while-I-bring-the-refreshments. Maybe cooking doesn't promote erudite discussion but it makes the talk come easy. If he doesn't remember a thing you said and if you didn't say a thing worth remembering, nevertheless he'll have a mental picture of a girl with a sprightly come-on.

Saying nothing with charm is an art, no doubt of it. Harmless as blue butterflies in the hair, just as pleasant and about as useful. But there is also a time to have something to say. Any man you'd care to be interested in permanently is bound to have some serious thoughts. And he is bound to want to share them.

These days the notion of serious thought leads directly, through the wide-open door of everyone's concern, into the war. If the war to you is largely a matter of braid and insignia, then your army man—or navy man or any other young man—will have to retreat into profound inner silence no matter how glibly he may keep up his end of the banter. His thoughts are long thoughts; confused, frequently; questioning, doubting, wondering. If you have discovered something for yourself in the way of values and have the words to share what you've found, his gratitude to you will be deep.

Even in normal times a young man has problems enough. He has to choose a profession and a school in which to learn it or a business in which he can learn as he climbs. He has to choose a place in which to practice his profession or business. He has apron strings to cut, the same as you do, and in some ways cutting ties is harder for a man. Perhaps he is interested in so many things that he can't seem to concentrate on his main choice the way he wants to; then he is unhappy with himself. Perhaps he concentrates so single-mindedly that he never seems to have time to read a book or hear a concert; then he is dissatisfied again. If he seems irritable the difficulty is likely to be deeper than diet, tradition to the contrary. There is probably too wide a gap between his plan

for himself and its achievement. Through your eyes he may get a new slant on things.

Now it is a bit difficult to walk up to the man of the evening and say, "Darling, something is palpably wrong with your adjustment to life. Let us sit quietly under a bo tree and philosophize." Serious conversation is usually incidental. You're talking about nothing special, just laughing and wisecracking the way you've done a thousand times, and then all at once you're in the midst of things that matter. Maybe you're decorating the gym or riding on a bus or having a cuib-service coke. Where you are or what you're doing is beside the point; it's what you have to say when you need to say something real. A man looks back on those conversations for years. They matter. But you can't pick meaning out of thin air. You pick it out of your own mind, which is either furnished or unfurnished and there's nothing you can do about it at the last minute.

Things you have in common are the things which matter first. Common hates, whether for corn pancakes or double features or industrial monopolies, are just as good as common hobbies. Friends in common are a wonderful take-off. Somehow you half expect this new friend to be like the friend you have in common although you needn't start off, as one girl did, with the cheerful question, "Are you witty like John?" Hardships, illnesses, losses, or skills, triumphs

and successes—experiences you've had in common matter first. And they also matter last. They are the ties which can bear the strain of separation, of distance in time or space. Sometimes we feel that the most meaningful thoughts cannot be put into words—but the thoughts which can be put into words are pretty useful once you get the knack of having thoughts and using words.

## *Sophistication*

Sure it's the same old riddle  
To be puzzling queens and kings,  
Which are the things that matter  
And which are the other things  
AMELIA JOSEPHINE BURR

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"SHE'S A NICE KID but not very sophisticated," or "She's a nice kid but too sophisticated." Either way, a man doesn't mean to be paying a compliment. Now what does he mean by sophistication? What do you mean by sophistication? Almost every woman wants to have some, thanks, and more or less recognizes it when she meets it in another woman. But when it comes to measuring her own, she's stymied. One reason she's stymied is because part of the charm of true sophistication is being so natural that you don't even know you're unusual.

*Sophisticated* is one of those words which have

not only changed meanings but still carry the taint of double meaning. It has the connotation of something deprived of native simplicity, made artificial, highly complicated. But sometimes it means worldly-wise through experience to the point of total disillusionment. "She's been around too much—always looking for something exotic" And other times it seems to mean a nice detachment from traditional conceptions and meaningless customs, a subtle, interesting, adventurous personality—"She's swell to take around . . . all sorts of places . . . always knows what to do and something to talk about."

Perhaps the difference lies in the degree of genuineness of the article. Real sophistication is forthright, has a sure touch, a kind of proud dignity even in unconventional circumstances. Pseudo sophistication is blasé, has a hard eagerness, a kind of shopworn boredom even in circumstances of obvious interest.

The quickest way to tell the pseudo sophisticate is to look for three negative qualities. uncertainty, uninventiveness and dissatisfaction. Any campus and any large business office will present examples of all three. Maxine, for instance, is a college junior. When she came to school she was not exactly a going concern but she had a kind of charm and a quick sense of humor. Too loud a voice but nice manners; the kind which show a girl has home background. Evidently she didn't quite know what she wanted out of col-

lege, or life, and she picked the wrong sorority. Every year someone in that house would get dropped from school and yet there was never anything so blatantly the matter with the house that it was read off campus. Girls from her sorority were inclined to drink too much and at the wrong times and places. Maxine loathed cocktails; they made her ill just the way some people are allergic to seafood. She really suffered in learning to drink. When a friend asked her why on earth she went through all that misery for something as unimportant as liquor, Maxine said she would rather die than be conspicuous and she felt a teetotaler was conspicuous these days.

Her freshman orientation tests proved she had good native intelligence and some ability in writing. She loved poetry passionately and had the beginnings of literary discrimination. But the girls laughed at her books of poetry. In a month she wouldn't be caught reading such stuff—although she kept on reading when her door was locked. By the time she was a sophomore she'd given up poetry entirely. Once she came to the dean and wanted to move out of the house; thought she'd be happier in a dorm. But she wasn't. She made too much effort to let the girls know she'd been around. Her language was over the border so the girls who took her in were those of the hard fringe. Every dorm has a brittle fringe.

By the end of her junior year, when she took the



placement and aptitude tests, she was about as mixed-up a personality as you could find. She was as uncertain of her likes and dislikes as the most bewildered child. And yet she had an air of supreme indifference to other people's opinion which some of her classmates mistook for self-assurance. She appeared surfeited with life. Beneath her mask she looked tired. She had worn herself out trying to be sophisticated and at the end of three years did not realize she was farther from the real thing than when she came to school. Her dissatisfaction with her courses, her instructors, her classmates and even the scenery was just about complete. Something was the matter with everyone except herself and by herself she was bored. Where she goes from here is as plain as a map in neons. Only a miracle of counseling on the part of someone who has the time and heart for it, and a grueling reordering of her habits, could possibly make a going concern of Maxine.

Ramona is another pseudo sophisticate. Four years ago, when she began work as a stenographer in the outer office of a well-known law firm, she was as sunny as a field of daffodils. Then she had natural red-gold hair, full of high lights, and the kind of figure which belongs on a poster. But her best asset was the way she teemed with ideas. Her topical limericks kept the office a-titter. She invented short cuts for all sorts of routine office business; good, sensible ones,

too. When the office force had their monthly party, she thought up the games which made them laugh for a week. No one was surprised when the senior partner moved her over the heads of half a dozen other girls and made her secretary to one of the younger members of the firm.

And then the wrong man took her out. A client whose business was women's ready-to-wear. He was handsome and hard; anyone could see that at a glance. He took her around; places she'd never been. She met his crowd. Maybe they were jealous of her native wit and her looks, anyhow they began to laugh at her as well as with her. Ramona couldn't take that. Although she was soon washed up with the bright young man, she wouldn't wave good-by to his crowd. She'd show them. She'd be as popular as the best they had. Well, she achieved her aim. When war came along and men got fewer, Ramona's dates piled up. She developed a devil-may-care attitude; wanted a party every night; said it was never late until it was early. Naturally she never knew when she quit being a pretty girl with a lilt to her and became instead a flint-faced dame—although still pretty.

Now from an ethical point of view it would be comforting to record that when Ramona quit being spontaneous and inventive around the office, she lost her job and had to reform and all that. It would be comforting because it seems to be a law of life that

genuineness in personality is rewarded and that the pseudo anything meets its own defeat. We like to see ethical implications pan out. But actually Ramona has not lost her job to date. She is still a good stenographer; youth will stand a lot of wear and tear. She still works half again as fast as most girls, which makes up for the time she takes out to go to the rest room to smoke. In fact, she is likely to have a promotion any day and by the time she is forty she may be a successful executive secretary.

But a short time ago an interesting thing happened. The senior partner came back to the firm after a year's absence in Washington and he invited Ramona, along with his own secretary who was ten years older, to a house party at his place in the country. Before he'd gone away he'd told his wife what a promising girl Ramona was; his wife had said then that they must give her a chance to meet the right people. First thing they returned they gave her the chance. It was quite a big house party, maybe thirty people around in the guest cottages and all. There was golf and tennis and swimming; there was also good and great recorded music. The woods on the place were maintained as a bird sanctuary; one of the country's most famous ornithologists was visiting there. Once Ramona had known a lot about birds; in fact it was an amusing discovery of her ability to whistle bird calls which had first brought her to the attention of the senior

partner. Naturally, since she was his guest, she was one of a little group whom he invited to go with him and the ornithologist on an early morning bird trip. Ramona accepted. But she happened to be one of a foursome who played poker practically all night and so she overslept. There was no reason she shouldn't play poker with the other guests. There was no reason she shouldn't tell as funny a story as the next one—maybe funnier—if you thought that kind funny at all. There was no reason she shouldn't have as many highballs as anyone else nor laugh as loud. There was no reason she shouldn't oversleep, miss the bird trip, and apologize profusely later. Neither is there any special reason—as far as she can see—why she has not been invited to another house party. Not that she cares, you understand. She still thinks she is too sophisticated for the senior partner's crowd, young or old.

She doesn't know that one of that house party is a close friend of the present King of England; went to school with him. Nor that one of the young women, scarcely five years her senior, has done a piece of research in physics which has revolutionized an important branch of air service. Nor that more than half that group could have gone right on with their conversations if someone had suddenly decreed all talk must be in French. And that one of the quieter young men is a ranking art critic who could

share his enthusiasms with a dozen others of the guests. Another is a doctor who came from China on the *Gripsholm*. Ramona simply doesn't know what she doesn't know; a multitude of cultural interests do not exist for her. So she is not drawn to nor sought out by the people who do know. She's ignorant and trite, once you get tired of her banter, a little hard, a little weary and, of late, more than a little discontented. But she still has her job and a lot of smart clothes and a crowd who give parties she's the life of

It is easier, all in all, to point out the pseudo sophisticates over twenty because by then a life pattern is pretty well set and registers itself in expression of countenance and in unconscious reactions. Adolescents, especially in their early teens, are given to uncertainty by the very nature of their growth and social development. The best are likely to have brash moments and try to act older than they are, to pretend to know more than they do, and to suggest obliquely that they have been around when actually they have just been reading a few colorful magazines.

Nevertheless an ordinary observer, meaning you or your classmates or any one of us, is seldom deceived for long. We know the difference between Faye, who transfers to the local high school in her junior year with curled-lip astonishment for our small-time parties, and Patricia who comes to live with her aunt and only betrays her years of schooling abroad by

her unstudied inclusion of older people in a conversation and her spontaneous delight in pastimes we take for granted. Faye makes us feel ordinary. Patricia makes us feel clever as if we had invented the good time she is having. A pseudo sophisticate tries to build herself up; she has to. The genuine article lets you be you because she is she. Remember John Kendrick Bangs's little elf?

I met a little Elfman once  
Down where the lilies blow.  
I asked him why he was so small,  
And why he didn't grow.  
He slightly frowned, and with his eye  
He looked me through and through.  
"I'm quite as big for me," said he,  
"As you are big for you!"

One quick way to catch on to a pseudo sophisticate is to watch what, where and whether she drinks. Meaning alcoholic beverages. Some genuinely discriminating persons drink. But practically all pseudos do. The main thing is to decide what you think on the subject of drink and then be yourself. Reach your decision on a fine sunny morning when you've just had a glass of milk and are feeling objective. Look your world over and look yourself over and make up your mind. Then when you get to a cocktail party, remember what your conclusion was. If you decided

to be an all-out guzzler, step right along with the other guzzlers. If you decided that two cocktails are your limit, positively and no exceptions, then make it two. If you do not like the stuff and don't care who knows it, or if you like it all right but consider alcohol a general social liability, then be serene under pressure.

Sure as hands go round the clock you won't be serene under pressure unless you have your mind made up. There's Charlotte who is afraid not to drink because any kind of refusal makes her feel insecure socially. Cocktails upset her and after a party is over she declares she has had her last. But when the next cocktail is passed she reacts with a confused giggle and takes it. The more she drinks the higher her voice goes and she always announces, "If it wasn't meant for me it wouldn't come my way!"

It is difficult to make up your mind on this matter, as on any other, without some pro-and-con thinking. One cold winter week end Janice brought three girls home from prep school for a house party. Her house was a roomy place with plenty of deep chairs and two fireplaces. "We're just going to relax and let the storm go by," Janice told her mother, "except for one thing."

"But that one thing is terribly important, Mrs. Cameron," Flo explained "It's terribly important and we've just got to do it."

Helene and Elizabeth chimed in "We've decided. And even if we get dropped from school we're going to do it."

Mrs. Cameron saw that it was indeed important, whatever it was. Then Janice explained. "We've got to have some experience with cocktails."

"Oh, that," Mrs. Cameron said. "What kind do you want?" She asked the question casually as she might have asked, "Do you take your olives stuffed or plain?" but she did not feel casual. She belonged to an aristocratic old tradition that ladies don't drink and she would as soon have sent her daughter to the opera in shorts as to see her mix a drink. But she sensed that the pressure of the times was something to reckon with. Now. So she stepped to the telephone and called the town's best hotel and asked for the bar. When she got the barkeeper she asked if he would send her, by special messenger, his book on mixing drinks along with the ingredients for two or three of his most popular cocktails.

Came the book and the liquor. First the girls mixed the cocktails of their choice and then sat down by the fire with the drinks and the book which Helene began to read aloud. Alcohol, said the bartender's book, is poison and should be treated as such. Taken into an empty stomach it will—and then followed a terse and accurate description of stomach physiology and contents. Antidotes for the poison were listed. The



bartender was told the best first aids to the drunk. He was told how to recognize the 'habitual drunkard. And finally, with no mincing of words, he was told to leave the stuff alone entirely and permanently if he wanted to remain a successful bartender.

The book proved more interesting than the cocktails—which none of the girls really enjoyed. "If I could learn to like this stuff I could learn to like buttermilk or my Uncle Joe," Elizabeth said, "and I don't even want to like either."

"I couldn't say I really like mine either," Flo agreed, "but then I didn't like shrimps for a long time. When somebody gives a luncheon for you it's embarrassing not to be able to swallow a shrimp. Hostesses don't call you up and ask you, 'Listen, darling, do you like shrimps?' Neither do they say, 'I'm giving you a cocktail party. Do you like cocktails?'"

"Word gets around, though," Helene ventured. "Everyone knows Jean Daugherty doesn't drink and yet if she were any more popular she would have to have an armed guard."

From there the conversation took off and was still putting along on all cylinders when the last log burned out. In a sense the important thing isn't the conclusion which each girl reached but the fact that they came to a conclusion. Not exactly the same conclusion but when they went to bed each of the girls had made up her mind what she intended to do about

drinking. The next Monday when they went back to school they knew where they stood.

A well-known reporter said of a distinguished Englishwoman who refused a cocktail offered by her highly distinguished host, "There was nothing conspicuous about her. She was just being herself the way she always is. But, you know, I thought she made the other women seem ordinary."

You don't have to follow suit to show you know your way around. If you are really good you can play a no-trump even when you don't hold all the high cards. An ancient superstition has it that good cards follow the bold player. Just make up your mind and then be yourself.

If the pseudo sophisticate is easy to spot, the real thing is also readily distinguishable with a bit of practice. There are certain marks. Assurance, discrimination and something which might be called stamina or independence. Now an outer assurance comes with practice. A woman of twenty-five who serves after-dinner coffee in her drawing room for the first time is likely to be a little awkward. She just won't have the offhand ease that would have been hers if she'd grown up in a family to whom after-dinner coffee was a custom.

The same with travel by train, steamship or air. Assurance comes with experience. If you have crossed and recrossed this country in a Pullman you know

the porter will bring you a table if you ask him. You know where to find writing paper in the lounge car, how to order in the diner. A hundred little things about the easy and inconspicuous way you make yourself at home prove that you are a sophisticated traveler. On a steamship you know how to get your deck chair placed where you want it; what to wear to the captain's dinner. In an airplane you know how to handle your tiny table tray of dinner; when to reach for the chewing gum! You know who and how much to tip. But you don't know these things on a first trip. Are you therefore embarrassed? Not if you are a genuinely sophisticated woman. You ask someone who does know and you are no more concerned about asking than if you had to ask the corner policeman the way to Highway K. After all, in either case, you only want some practical directions. No one person can know everything; what a burden if he could.

But these manners and customs which can be learned by practice give assurance to the pseudo sophisticate as well as to the genuinely sophisticated. It's the next degree of assurance which the pseudo is likely to know less about—the assurance of cultural knowledge. Your own vocabulary gives you away about as quickly as anything. The pseudo probably has a line of banter but it is trite; she uses the same catch phrases over and over. She is likely to be given to indiscriminate profanity, not realizing that when

hell faded from popular theology the word "damn" became merely cheap instead of daring. Too much of a cheap thing cheapens you. A sophisticated vocabulary makes use of synonyms; "beautiful" is not the only adjective to describe pulchritude, elegance, harmony and comeliness. A sophisticated vocabulary makes use of allusions, onomatopoeia, quotations—all the subtleties which give our language strength and charm. And at the same time a sophisticated vocabulary is neither pretentious nor self-conscious. Adroit use of words, however, comes only through acquaintance with good literature and habitual hobnobbing with other folk who have the same easy mastery of the language tool.

There is a still higher degree of assurance which marks the genuinely sophisticated. An assurance of spirit. Actions depend on attitudes but attitudes, in turn, depend upon values. To know what is genuinely important in life gives unshakable assurance. A girl who has mapped out her spiritual meridians is not likely to have difficulty chalking in the hours and minutes. A sense of proportion and relationships is hers.

Akin to assurance is discrimination. To know the real from the counterfeit requires both experience and taste. And how does one acquire taste? From association with persons who have it! And if that

sounds a little like the hen-and-egg conundrum again, it's because life *is* a procession of causes and effects with each modifying its successor. People with taste help to form your taste and then your taste, grown mature and daring and assured, helps to check theirs. When is it smart to dash around to the neighborhood stores in slacks and when is it rowdydowdy? When is it a friendly gesture to crash a party and when is it thick-skinned procedure? When does it show good sense to go home with another escort than the one who brought you and when does it denote lack of breeding? If there were a single hard and fast rule for such things life would be easier. But all behavior is relative. Being "good" or "bad" form depends ultimately upon your objective and your objective depends upon your *self*. When it comes to judging your own actions, you are the norm. If an action fits the essential you, the core of your personality, then it is probably your action.

But even girls with wide experience cannot always be sure what their real self is because the process of growing up is the process of making up one's mind about the kind of self one wants. In time of uncertainty it helps to look around you at the actions and reactions of the people you would most like to resemble. No one wants to copy another's ways exactly but persons of known ability and sophisticated

discrimination are pretty good standard-bearers to follow until your own sense of direction is more certain.

By and by discrimination becomes second nature. Watch a sophisticated woman shop. Whatever the persuasive saleswoman may say, she knows which gown is not her type. And by her type she doesn't mean anything so vague as the athletic type who must wear tailored togs or the patrician type who needs simple, distinctive clothes. She has a sixth-sense reaction, born of experience, that tells her when a gown, which might be lovely on another woman, is not for her. That's discrimination born of trained taste

Obviously discrimination has to have experience in order to grow. No connoisseur of fine foods develops competent judgment by eating only meat, potatoes and gravy. She has to experiment, to try new foods, new combinations. Live for a while in any college dormitory and you can soon tell the provincial from the cosmopolite. The unsophisticated girls eat only the foods they are accustomed to eating back home. Sometimes their provincialism catches them up short.

When Myrtle Dean was a child she despised both oysters and the idea of oysters. "Oysters are good food," her mother said. "No one should scorn good palatable food. Besides, you will meet oysters all your

life and if you cannot manage them easily you may sometime feel conspicuous."

Better conspicuous than swallowing oysters, little Myrtle thought

But Myrtle grew up and at the age of eighteen she was taken out to dinner by a Wonderful Young Man. He had everything, Myrtle sighed proudly. He had been everywhere. In the sunshine of his attention, and the headwaiter's attention to him, Myrtle glowed. She hoped she looked as if she had been everywhere, too. The Young Man handled the menu expertly. "How about starting off with some Blue Points?" he asked.

Without the slightest idea what Blue Points might be, Myrtle agreed—hoping she displayed the proper mixture of indifference and delight. Be it chalked up to her credit that when the large and luscious oysters appeared in their open shells, she did not blink an eye. She ate the oysters. Swallowed them down without choking, and hoped she would not pass out completely until the last oyster had slid to its destination.

More than a quarter century has passed since the Blue Points made a cosmopolite of Myrtle Dean. She has eaten the choice foods of three continents and never turned down a dish although it should be added in all honesty that a certain Indian delicacy made of fish eyes is nothing she would order on her

own, notwithstanding the fact that scientists say it is a gold mine of vitamin A.

The moral is that you had better eat turnips at home before you go to visit your fiancé's family and find that turnips are their favorite dish. Or papayas, pomelos, pomegranates.

Discrimination is life's longest, hardest and most rewarding lesson. Discrimination: when to be snippy, snappy or subtly serious. How to be honest in a tight place. Who are the real people. What to do and what to leave undone without repining. Which things matter forever.

A genuinely sophisticated woman has one further characteristic. She has deep-rooted independence; a kind of taste with courage. In an entirely open-minded way, she knows what she thinks and what she believes in and she goes her way. Not trodding on the preferences of those around her but inconspicuously being herself. If she enjoys interesting people no matter what their color or cultural background, she makes a natural place for them in her life, ignoring the hedge of eyebrows which might obstruct the path of a less sure personality.

This kind of independence needs to be exercised early in life. Merle goes off to school with half a trunk of good records and a player attachment for her radio. She gets in with a crowd who swoon for Sinatra and sizzle for someone else. Poser does Merle



retire her good records to the darkness of her trunk and take up with the current passion? If she's a pseudo she does; if she's the real thing she sticks to her guns. But listen—maybe Merle goes to school with Sinatra in her trunk and the crowd she gets in with happen to be musical bluebloods who hang over the renderings of Shostakovitch by the hour. Does Merle then smother Sinatra? Not if she's the real thing! She stands up for her own preference as long as it really is her preference. Maybe she gets something the others miss. Maybe, again, she misses something the others get.

The trick is to be open-minded, out to learn, but not shoved into a groove by other people's decisions. With all respect to the voice-of-the-people doctrine, you had better beware when an entire group agrees. Hunt out the minority dissenters and listen to their argument. Pioneers of culture, as of politics, are likely to dare alone at first. But today's daring is tomorrow's sophistication.

"Assured, discriminating and independent"—who wouldn't like to hear the Man of the Moment sum it up in those three words? Meaning you.

## *To Have and to Hold*

Love one another, but make not a bond of love  
Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores  
of your souls  
Fill each other's cup but drink not from the  
same cup.  
Give one another of your bread but eat not from  
the same loaf .

Give your hearts but not into each other's keep-  
ing,  
For only the hand of Life can contain your  
hearts  
And stand together yet not too near together,  
For the pillars of the temple stand apart,  
And the oak and the cypress grow not in each  
other's shadow

KAHLIL GIBRAN, *The Prophet*

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IF SOMEONE would codify the tactics for hanging onto a man once he comes within range and then give the treatise a large Latin name, we might get some scientific attention to this important social-psychological problem *Homotenerics*—there's a good proper word for it *Homo* for *man* and *tenerere*, *to hold* "Yes, I'm a freshman taking the required courses: English, math, history, a language and homotenerics."

Once we admit the premise that men are worth

having and holding—at least *a* man—then in all honesty we have to admit that there are certain difficulties to be overcome between the doorbell and the altar. Comes a new Romeo and off we go for a big evening. First the horrific job of making conversation simultaneously with the problem of appearing as sophisticated as we wish we were. And then, sooner or later, the basic business of determining the neckline. Where to draw it. Why. Whether.

Early in her high school career a girl discovers that, when it comes to necking, there are two kinds of boys: those who confine their expressions of affection to the girl for whom they really develop some affection—and those who look at every girl as a possible experience.

The first group treat their girl friends like pals. Boy meets girl as person meets person. You rate if you're an asset to have around. He asks you out because he thinks you'll enjoy the show or the party or the game or whatever he has picked out to enjoy himself. Maybe he shows you a degree of deference, especially if he's shy. Gone are the cavalier touches, however; no steering by your elbow across the dangerous intersections. Little things such as opening doors for you are prompt but offhand. Probably not once during the whole of a swell evening do you think, "Ah, I'm a girl and he's a boy." He's not sex-conscious and neither are you.

All down the line modern girls and boys tend to treat the opposite sex as *people*, individuals on their own merit. Any topic of genuine interest is grist for the conversational mill and everybody turns the mill. Off on a hike if the rough stuff begins, say a tousele over a hamburger, a girl is likely to find herself rolled on the ground in no gentle fashion. The boy friend would just as soon trip her up or drag her around by the hair as to wrestle with another boy. This frank give and take between boys and girls may be a phase of the general trend toward equal rights for women and men including such matters as equal pay for the same work, equal promotional opportunities in business, and two-parent support of families. The attitude is distinctly a break for the modern girl, it not only permits her to hold her own but pushes her to make herself as much of a person as she can.

When a boy with a lot of girl friends decides to pitch his woo in one direction only, it is probably because he has found by experience that he has a better time with this particular girl than with any other. If you're the girl and you feel the same way, then you are likely to take up steady dating. There's nothing new, of course, about having a steady. Our great-grandmas had them: they went to and from spelling bees with the same swains in the same cutter, snowy night after snowy night. And steady dates have the same advantages now as then. You

don't have to worry who is going to ask you to the next event; you don't have to wonder how you rate. You both know you're congenial; you can talk or not talk and still have a good time. You're used to one another and since you know you hit it off why spend time on someone else? There aren't any answers because these are just facts.

But there are two or three other considerations. Specialization too soon in any line narrows your experience and hence your judgment. If you intend to be quite a woman one of these days, then you need wide experience with many kinds of people. You can't tell what you may miss by building a wall around your interests too soon. Sometimes you have your most fun when, where and with whom you least expect it. For instance, a gawky lad stutters up for a date and, feeling bighearted, you agree to go. To your amazement he takes you to some perfectly stunning place and shows you a wonderful time. Or he proves more interesting than any ten boys you've been out with before. To be sure, you may not want his company for a steady diet but he may have introduced you to one item of permanent interest for which you are always grateful to him. It might be birds he knew, or a coin collection which gave you the notion of starting one of your own, or he might have a passion for music you've always wished you understood. If you keep in mind that you're a grow-

ing personality and that your interests are now being formed, your taste set and your habits built, then you will realize the value of varied interests.

Steady dating has another liability in the fact that relationships are never static. You learn to like the boy better each time you're with him and the first thing you know you're wearing his pin and people begin to think you're engaged and soon it's taken for granted you have settled for life. Then either you marry younger than you wanted to or the engagement drags on. If not out. It's no special compliment to him to pledge him your undying affection when you've never really been around with anyone else. All your life you'll be glad the man you married had a little competition. And he'll be glad, too. So long as competitive courtship is part of our social custom, the girl rates who presents some competition. You might be surprised, too, at a boy's unexpressed relief when he finds you don't accept all his invitations. He may enjoy a little more rope than you're giving him but be too polite to say so. Hold your lariat with an easy hand if you don't want to drag dead weight.

But there is that second group of boys to whom dating is synonymous with necking and nothing else. When they take you out for a good time they mean just one thing. You'd like to date, all right, but not on those terms. Do you therefore stay at home? Not

if you're bright. You learn how to manage the date your own way or you eliminate the man

Now mentally it is easy to dispose of the heavy wooers. But in an actual situation things sometimes get out of hand. You meet Bill at a dance, say, and he asks to take you to the movies the next night. He is good-looking and a smooth dancer and everybody seems to like him but something about the way he dances makes you think that maybe he isn't going to be interested exclusively in your conversation. At home, getting ready to go out, you know exactly how you'll manage. At the movies you'll have your purse in your hands and you'll be absorbed in the picture and you simply aren't going to start off holding hands. You don't know who may be sitting beside or behind you and besides you think it's silly. As for coming home in the car, you have a good pert line right on the tip of your tongue. And when he goes to kiss you good night you're going to give him that one about only being kissed on your birthday—all the while acting a little bored but gay. You have it worked out.

But the way it happens is different. At the movies he doesn't even try to hold your hand. Driving home he keeps both hands on the wheel. You like him. Your worries were in vain. In fact, you wonder if maybe you aren't as attractive as you thought you were. Rehearsing your line was time wasted. And

then, all of a sudden, he swings the car up a side street, parks under a big elm and before your surprise has really registered, you find yourself thoroughly kissed. And now that it happened, in a way you couldn't seem to avoid, how do you feel about the matter? Maybe you feel sick—both terrified and defiled. All you want is to be home and have a hot bath and lock the door and never have another date. A crude boy can give a girl a lasting headache, sometimes, unless she gives herself a mental shaking and makes herself realize that all masculinity is not so crass.

But maybe you reacted quite differently. Maybe you thought he was exciting and you felt pleased with yourself for rating all this attention on a first date. You decide you have a way with men, after all, and you don't care how soon the word gets around that you're good to take out. Is the road ahead then smooth and easy for you, headed as you are for success?

It is not

Unfortunate as it may seem, the blithe and indiscriminate neckers do not ordinarily pick off the top-notch husbands. On the other hand, neither do the touch-me-nots. This is another of those problems in human relations requiring a bit of scrutiny.

Any girl who knows her birds and bees knows that the mating instinct is strong in all animals including



humankind. Some timeless drive brings the male and female of the species together for the basic purpose of producing more of their kind. In primitive society girls take on the responsibilities of reproduction while still in their early teens. In more complex societies the need for preparation to meet the problems and opportunities of involved cultural life, a process we call education, tends to make girls wait to grow up before they marry; to grow up physically, mentally, emotionally. In a sense the measure of civilization is the degree to which immediate satisfactions can be set aside for the sake of greater long-time satisfactions. In our present society an adult marriage with happy adjustment for both the man and woman is accepted as more satisfactory in the long run than indiscriminate mating of the very young. But there are pros and cons.

Does heavy petting promote happy marriage? There is no single final answer. No one can say that a girl with a brisk past never marries a fine man and achieves a happy home because some girls who have knocked around a good deal do finally marry happily. They are, however, the exception. Heavy petting dulls discrimination. The girl herself becomes less demanding of quality in a man. Moreover, as soon as her boy friends begin to think of a girl as rather cheap they are less likely to want the permanent relationship of marriage.

About as much factual evidence as we have comes as the result of high school and college polls which indicate that young people themselves feel that indiscriminate petting tends to mark a girl as worn goods, just as a dress which has been tried on too many times eventually finds its price marked down for clearance. If the intimacy has included sexual relations before marriage, the girl has further hazards. There is not only the age-old risk of having a baby before she wants to be a mother, and this is a much more common risk in spite of modern contraceptive measures than many young people realize, but also the hazard of distrusting her own choice when it comes to permanent marriage. All in all, society has come to the conclusion that these extracurricular relationships are risky business.

Society, however, is not always right in its judgments. Young people point out, fairly enough, that someone has to do the experimenting. Someone has to lead the way, to take a risk, to try and perhaps to fail. They further point out that we have not yet arrived at a satisfactory answer to the marriage problem. One look at the divorce statistics proves that fact. But one look at the happy homes, which are often our own, brings another fact to the fore: love which includes mutual interest in hobbies, work, friends, ideas and ideals has a lot better chance to last than love which is largely passion. And marriage, like

other covenants, has a better chance when openly arrived at. There's no getting around the conclusion that the rules which society has worked out are based on the experience of a great many human beings who have wanted the same kind of happiness we want and made the same tragic mistakes when they took a short view

Often girls fail to get what they think they are getting from the over ardent attention of some boy. The thing they really want may be emotional security, the sense of being cared for deeply by someone, of coming first in someone's life. When a home has been broken by death or divorce or when parents have been too occupied with other interests to give a child the warmth of affection she needs, she may feel starved for affection. A boy comes along offering at least temporary attention of high degree and she accepts it on his terms. But she fails to ask herself whether there is genuine affection behind the gestures of affection. How much does he really care for her well-being? If she left town tomorrow would she still be the center of his interest or would he quickly fill her place? If her hunger has deceived her into thinking a husk has nourishment, the quicker she discovers her mistake the sooner she will find real food

Americans hate to be taken for a ride; that's a national characteristic. We don't want to be sold

short And we don't think it is easy to sell us short either When we pay for solid gold we expect to get eighteen carats. And that's a pretty fair standard to apply to the necking business Do you really get what you pay for? Are you accepting what the poets call the empty habiliments of love? Or do you rate for and wait for the genuine article?

At present the idea of waiting for love is not in the air. War has sped up the tempo of our days. When men are off to battle, when possible death looms over the next hill, the mood is to take as much of life as one's heart can hold. Eighteen is young to face destruction Boys need all they can get of love. They need someone of their own to cherish, to fight for, to come home to. Girls share their uncertainty So far as they can they want to share the suffering, too They want to give their strength in whatever way they can. Society—experience—have no very helpful advice to offer the young. The most the generation which weathered the last war can say to the generation which must weather this one is a word about the requirements that love and the bonds of marriage lay upon them. To have and to hold is not wishful thinking. It is today's imperative for tomorrow's happiness.

## *Happy Ever After*

I shall light a candle of understanding in thine  
heart which shall not be put out

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"HAPPY EVER AFTER" is a day-by-day affair depending entirely upon you That's what it all boils down to You take it and make it, this life of ours, as it comes You have to do your own sowing and reaping. You pay your own penalty for poor care of your body and no one else can carry your pain You develop your own mind if you expect to realize the joys of knowledge and creative achievement. No one can learn a theorem for you and certainly no one can compose your music or paint your picture No one can make your adjustment to your universe. All the basic responsibilities have to be carried by you no matter how you

may plan and struggle to have it otherwise. Likewise all the great joys are the product of your own investment. It seems, all in all, as if you had better be a pretty important person to yourself.

But right away there's a catch to it. There isn't any *you* really, at least not for practical purposes, apart from the people whose lives have affected yours and are affecting yours and will affect yours. You can never sum yourself up once for all and say, "Now this is I," because you are constantly being added to, subtracted from, multiplied and divided by the people you love and hate and ignore and know nothing about. Where did you get your thoughts anyway, or even the materials for your thoughts? Back in your infancy from your parents and family and friends and all those others who fed you and shushed you and reordered their lives to make place for yours. Where did you get your political views including a form of government to have views on? Where did you get your taste in clothes, in music, in sports? Where did you get your idea of God? Someone else gave you everything. You just aren't anybody on your own.

Everything and nothing—that's you to yourself. How can you make sense out of that? It's the easiest thing in the world—and the hardest. *The secret is to select as you go along* When you go into a grocery store you don't buy everything on the shelves.

When you turn on the radio you can pick your program or even turn off the contraption entirely. You choose your own shoes, your own course of study at school. All down the line you choose those items which appeal to you.

In the same way you can choose the people who make your *self*. To be sure, if a member of your family is and does everything you do not want to be, you may not be able to choose to have nothing to do with that person. But you can choose to screen his influence out of your personality. You just don't let that one's ways come through to you. Practically speaking, you can even choose to be unaffected by other people's meanness or shortcomings—the way some plants shellac their own leaves to protect them from too much sun and then go right on growing in their own way.

Now some hairsplitters will call attention to the small amount of choice you had originally in being born and to the fact that you can't help it if your ancestors have been distinguished musicians for generations, or have had six toes or a tendency to go bald young, and have bequeathed their predispositions to you. They will also point out that even if you are born with high endowment you may not be free to choose to use your gifts wisely. You cannot choose to paint immortal landscapes, for instance, if you have lived all your life in a tenement and never seen

a sweep of open country. And they are right. Your heredity and your environment do set up certain limitations. But only limited limitations! Because whatever you are and wherever you are, you still have a free will. Within your setup you can choose what you want to be yours and what you want to be you. And thus your setup changes.

The most interesting thing about this age-old argument on the degree of an individual's predestination, by means of fate or biology, is the fact that you as an individual cannot change your native endowment. You can only begin where you are at the moment you discover yourself. And the most interesting thing about the argument on degrees of free will is the practical fact that you can begin to exercise as much free will as you have when you decide to give it a try. Since you cannot go back to your infancy and begin over, knocking some better initial habits into your own head the way you now wish your parents had done, one choice is made for you. you will *have* to start where you are and do the best possible job on yourself.

The place where you are may be a very unhappy place. Maybe you are feeling helpless and lonely—two of the worst predicaments for the human spirit. A sophomore recently wrote this letter to her mother:



DEAREST MOMMIE,

Tonight I am feeling very blue and I want to talk to you and this is the only way I can Mommie, I'm lonesome Deep down inside I'm terribly young and afraid Afraid of what the next few years will bring I feel so unsure of myself and so helpless Surrounded by wonderful friends I shouldn't feel helpless but I do.

You must have realized by this time that you have a rather peculiar daughter The reason I think no one understands me is because I don't even understand myself at times I'm so uncertain and so terribly stupid I've nothing to grasp onto for help and I feel I'm to be forever lonely . . .

You want to be proud of me and I want you to be, too, but I feel so insufficient and so lacking in so many things If this were the first time I wouldn't even bother about a letter but I'm getting worried

This is an important letter in American annals, not just because the girl who wrote it is a lovely and vivid young person full of possibilities and surrounded by hard circumstances, but because there are so many girls who might have signed it. So many that they form a part of the social pattern of our day and help to defeat one another, for moods and attitudes are contagious just as long-tailed shirts and short pigtails are contagious The current mood of bewilderment and precariousness is contagious. Most present-day students could at some time quote feel-

ingly the words of Ezra, "For the world lies in darkness, and those who live in it have no light"

In order to bring yourself out of such a state you have to make a big choice and a thoughtful one. Sometimes you can kid yourself along from day to day and from date to date. You can tell yourself you must have some kind of indigestion and that you'll feel better if the sun shines tomorrow. But other times nothing will help except a good long thought. Sooner or later, you have to think out what meaning life has for you. The whole cradle-to-the-grave business has to make sense or else somewhere along the line you will be overwhelmed. So many possibilities can throw you off base. Too much responsibility; also too little. Too much sorrow; not enough joy. Illness, loss, privation—these things will at times step out from a serene landscape and positively mow you down unless you know your way.

Now children do not ask where their days are headed. As soon as they begin to ask they are on their way to adulthood. And some grownups never ask where they are going and why, which only proves that the body can mature and leave the mind still trailing. A genuine adult, however, wants to know his ultimate destination, whether the road he is on leads toward it and what sort of progress he is making.

What is life's meaning for you? Some persons will

tell you right off the bat that life has no meaning. You are born, you live out your days and finally you die—that's the whole story and there's no more reason for it than for most stories. If you like it, you're lucky. If you don't like it, that's just too bad. It's a mechanistic world, they say, and by that they mean that somehow things got started the way a perpetual-motion top might suddenly spring into action and then keep on spinning through its own inertia. You are merely a pinprick on this top and not responsible for yourself nor any of the other pinpricks around you. Whether you crack safes or care for the sick is all one in the end, you can neither be blamed nor praised for being what you are.

But other persons will tell you that life's meaning is growth toward perfection, that there is a Reality greater than we have yet apprehended toward which we are making our way. The whole evolutionary process does not end in futility, they insist, but in the development of awareness and faculties we now but dimly sense. They point out an emerging pattern in the long span of history, a pattern made up of beauty and love and courage and all those things that the human spirit has cherished through the ages. The growth of your own spirit is in your own hands, they say; you can verify this meaning if you want to. And furthermore, you have powers untouched which will sweep in to reinforce your efforts

once you decide that the meaning of life is growth.

So here you are again: "pay your money and take your choice." Whichever meaning you choose will determine the values you want to live for. Meaning always determines values—the things, the people, the ways you cherish. And your values determine your actions. If one of your values is the possession of things, then you will plan your days to acquire things. If friendship has high value to you, then you will throw your interest into other persons' lives. If you value fame you act in one way; if service seems important your actions will be different.

All down the line your happiness lies in digging out the most meaning for life, in making that meaning clear to yourself in the values you cherish, and then in setting your daily action after the pattern you have chosen. If you go only half the way and dig out values but ignore them in your way of living, then you'll hate yourself to the end of the road. You have to act the way you believe if you want to live with yourself. And you may be sure no one else will have much satisfaction in living with you, nor you with them, when you don't feel comfortable living with yourself.

Simple, isn't it? About as simple as higher mathematics. But built on the same procedure: if you begin where you are, first steps first, you can move with speed and accuracy right up the line to the

point where weighing the stars is all in a day's excitement

To be open-minded without being gullible, to be sure without being cocksure, to be intrepid without being foolhardy—these are the measures of your future. Gibran had a phrase for it “In that longing for your giant self lies your goodness and that longing is in all of you.” Your happiness lies in the same place.



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